The Fair Lavinia and Others
Mary E. Wilkins Freeman

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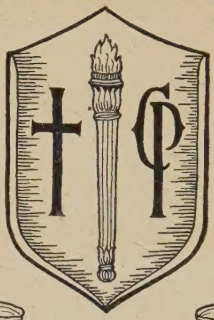

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THE FAIR LAVINIA AND OTHERS

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A HUMBLE ROMANCE
JEROME—A POOR MAN
EVELINA'S GARDEN
SILENCE
THE LOVE OF PARSON LORD
THE PORTION OF LABOR
UNDERSTUDIES
SIX TREES
THE GIVERS
THE DEBTOR
BY THE LIGHT OF THE SOUL
THE FAIR LAVINIA, and Others

Harper & Brothers, Publishers

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[See p. 37

"SHE STOOD STILL, FRAMED IN THE DOORWAY"

College of the Pacific
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The Fair Lavinia

And Others

BY

MARY E. WILKINS FREEMAN

ILLUSTRATED

NEW YORK AND LONDON
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TO

MRS. ELIZA FREEMAN

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THE FAIR LAVINIA

THE FAIR LAVINIA

THE spring was wonderful that year: a year long ago; it was late, there had been many northeast storms, and frosts, but it was at last fairly triumphant. The trees were forth all together in a silently hustling crowd, and it seemed as if many of them, instead of taking their turns for flowering, and leafing as usual, were pushing to the front, regardless of all the laws of the vernal season. One looking from his window saw leaves of maples deepening from rose to green against the fixed green of others which had more direct sunlight. The dark limbs of oaks having dropped their last year's shag of russet, which had endured so long at their knotty knees, to be pierced by violets and spring beauties, showed tufts of gold. Between the greens, ranging in all tones, were the cherry boughs, so aërial with white blooms that it seemed as if they might float away into space, and the slowly deepening gray

and rose and white of the apple-trees. The lilacs were tipped with brownish pink; the snowball-bushes bore faint green spheres; the birches were clad as lightly as nymphs, revealing their graceful limbs, white with the passion of the spring, through dim clouds of amber green; the willows wept with tears of liquid gold, and everywhere were the gold bosses of the dandelions upon the green shield of spring.

Young Harry Fielding, pacing up and down before the house of Parson Samuel Greene, where he was being fitted for Harvard, could not keep his mind upon the learned book in his hand. He too was affected by the mad, sweet turmoil of the spring. Greek imagery became real to him, and he was one to whom the real became always most fully evident through the lens of fancy. It was as if he had come suddenly upon a dance of nymphs led by the god Pan under the green arch of the trees. Wild music filled his brain: that music which the first man had heard and followed. His own feet almost followed it. This music began and ended in the earth and the joy of life, but that in itself seemed eternal. The earth seemed no longer a passing and vain show, but an endless pageant of rapture. Harry felt that his state of mind must be sinful. He had always worn his New England conscience as a species of stay for his moral back, as the

women of that day wore busks at their innocent bosoms. Now it swayed like a birch branch, bearing him along with it in a dizzy arc of delight. Had he been a Catholic, he would have crossed himself; as it was, his soul sent up a petition to the stern Divinity of whom he had been taught. But that stern God suddenly assumed a smiling face. He looked upon him through the eyes of countless flowers; He breathed love and reassurance through all the soft voices of the spring. Harry was gazing up with great black eyes, as full of wondering delight as a child's, at the blue crystal of the sky, against which tossed the gold feathers of the trees, when another young man, emerging from the parson's gate, purposely collided with him. Harry's hand which did not hold the book clinched involuntarily, and he frowned; for although destined for the ministry, he had fighting blood in his veins. Then he laughed, for it was only John Brooks, who was always playing off a jest upon some one whenever he was able.

John Brooks was tall and loose-jointed and clumsy. His blond, streaky hair fell in straight lines over his high stock, which cut his double chin and forced his head back into a pose of obstinacy which well expressed him, in spite of the humorous twinkle in his prominent blue

eyes. He clapped a heavy hand upon the other's shoulder. "What are you mooning about, sir?" he asked.

"I am not mooning."

"Not mooning? You are walking on the moon instead of the earth, and the wool which the moon-calves shed is clinging to you. The spring fever has got in your blood, brother. Purges both for the body and mind you need. I will prescribe—"

Henry gave the other young man an impatient shove. "Enough of this nonsense!" he cried, angrily.

"Nay, but wait a bit, sir. You have not heard my prescription. 'Tis no bitter pill, but the sweetest morsel that ever was. 'Tis my cousin Lavinia Creevy, otherwise known as the 'fair Lavinia,' and well she deserves to be so known. She comes by stage this afternoon with my aunt Elizabeth, to be present at the closing exercises. So look your best, Harry, and be on the alert, for the fair Lavinia is well versed in book-lore. She has some knowledge of Latin even; and yet she is a notable housewife. Shall I tell you how she is favored, Harry?"

Fielding looked at his book. "I have no time," he replied, in a curious, wavering, fascinated voice.

The other laughed. "That is what time is for in the spring," he said. "The fair Lavinia is tall and slender, but not too slender, and she has the way of a gentle and good woman; and yet she can laugh, when the matter be worth laughter, not giggling at naught, as is the way with some maids. She is discreet and modest, and she is not shamefaced, since she knows well her own worth, though she is not puffed up by it. She has no megrims, nor need to dose with salts, and the like, for swooning, like most of her sex. For the rest, she is as fair as a lily, and it seems as if her veins ran silver; and her eyes are like violets, and her throat is long and white, and drooping in the swath of lace which veils its fairness; and her hair is long, with curls over the ears, and caught up with a high comb, and shining like gold. And her cheeks and lips are like blushing roses. She is the belle of all Whitfield, and indeed of the whole county; and yet she has seen no one to whom her heart inclined, although she is so gentle to all, and so pitying that she has not love to give them. Sometimes it seems to me that the maid will wed without loving, so sorrowful she is for lack of love to return for love, and so willing to bestow her sweetness and kindness upon all."

"Nay, that she must not do," cried Fielding.

Then his face flushed angrily at the other's laugh.

"Caught you are already at the mere tale of a maid's charms," cried John Brooks, with an elfish twinkle, "and what will you be at the sight of her? Your mouth is all ready for sweets, Harry. Make ready yourself in your best before the Whitfield stage arrives. Is any of your own family coming, Harry?"

"My father and Isabel Done."

"Isabel Done?"

"Isabel Done is a distant cousin, an orphan, who has lived with us since my mother died, and keeps house for my father."

"Young?"

"A year younger than I."

"Is she fair to see?"

"I know not."

"You know not? Why, have you not seen her, man?"

"As often as the face of the clock."

"And you know not how she looks? Then she is not fair."

"Who said she was not overfair? She is as fair as any. None ever said Isabel was not fair."

"And I dare say she has a disposition of the best."

"Who said she had not would need to reckon with me," cried Harry, hotly.

Brooks laughed. "Well, Harry," he said, "put on that flowered waistcoat of yours before the Whitfield stage comes in, bringing the fair Lavinia." Brooks laughed again mockingly at the eager look in Harry's eyes, but the boy was too possessed by the fair image which his friend had conjured up to notice the mockery. A strong imagination had Harry Fielding, and was given to writing poetry upon the sly, and his mental vision projected itself towards the future and the unseen to such an extent that he had a species of mental short-sightedness, but knew it not. Dreams were to him more real than verities, and a verity to become substantial to him must needs be transposed into a dream. All this John Brooks, who had a wit and understanding beyond his years, knew, and regaled himself upon, although his friend knew nothing of it. Being of such a serious and enthusiastic nature, he had little sense of humor.

After John Brooks had left him, he continued to pace up and down before the parson's house, with its hip-roof and projecting second story, and its garden bordered by box, which was coming forth bravely. Harry smelled the strange acrid odor of the box, wrought into a bouquet of perfume with musk and clove-pinks and the almond of fruit blossoms and the vital

breath of new grass, and now he could also realize emanating from his own soul a fragrance which accorded well with that of the spring. The fair Lavinia was what he had so innocently and wonderingly missed. Now he had her image close to his heart, as close as the maid herself could ever be—perhaps closer. He saw her: that gentle, pitying creature of ivory and rose and silver, fashioned like some sweet idol of the emotions. He saw her before him with the eyes of his spirit; he noted the radiant droop of her golden curls, the mottled shell of the comb which crowned them, the wonderful soft radiance of her blue eyes, and her tender smile, which withheld nothing and offered nothing, but was wholly maidenly, and he smiled at her with his whole soul, and loved her with his whole soul.

The Whitfield stage was half an hour late that afternoon, on account of one of the leaders casting a shoe and having to delay at a smithy. The Boston stage, which was properly due some time later, arrived first. Harry, in a brave-flowered waistcoat, was at the gate with John Brooks nd some other of his fellows. Harry's face fell when the stage came fully into sight, for he had thought it would come from Whitfield, but he stepped forward to welcome his father and Isabel Done. However, only

Isabel, clad in dove gray, with a little gray mantle and a bonnet with a gray plume, alighted to greet him. His father had been detained in Boston by a stress of business. Isabel paled a little when she first saw Harry, although she had but little color to lose in any case, but she greeted him with a gentle dignity and kindness, as was her wont, and pointed prettily her little satin-shod foot as she advanced up the box-bordered path to the parson's house, with Harry by her side and the admiring glances of all the young men upon her. She saw these glances without seeming to see them, but she would have given them all for one such glance from Harry Fielding's eyes. She was a beauty, albeit of a singular type. Not a trace of rose was there in her smoothly curved cheek, which had instead a warm ivory-color, perhaps obtained through some Spanish ancestor whose blood had mixed with the Anglo-Saxon years ago. Her eyes were blue, with thick fair brows and lashes, and her hair rippling in great ripples so matched her ivory-toned skin that she might have been a statue for her whole coloring, except the faint rose of her lips. She was no sooner in her bedroom removing the dust of travel than John Brooks had Harry Fielding by the velvet collar and was shaking him. "And you knew not how that beauty looked,"

cried he. "Fie! man, hast no eyes in thine head?"

Fielding shook himself free. "Isabel is well enough to see," he replied, "but I have always seen her, and, to tell the truth, she looks to me as like other girls as one of those pinks in the bed yonder looks like all the other pinks." With that Fielding pointed to a bed of pinks which were bursting from their calyxes with excess of bloom and exhaling a breath of honey and cloves.

Brooks looked at him contemptuously. "As much like other girls as one of the pinks like the others!" mocked he. "She is a rose among common blooms, or a lily. You are thinking but of the fair Lavinia. How near is the cousinship between you and that beauty?"

"Not near," replied Harry, absently, staring down the road, from which columns of golden dust were slowly rising in the light of the setting sun. "I hear the Whitfield stage."

"Yes, so do I," mocked Brooks; "and now for the fair Lavinia, to whom without even one glimpse of her you have fallen captive!" Then the great stage rolled up with tramp of hoof and toot of horn and crack of whip, and the passengers swarmed forth. There were many, for a number of the young men who attended Parson Greene's school came from that section of

the country. Fielding watched with his heart thumping. He saw his friend John Brooks step forward and greet with a kiss a small maiden who resembled him closely. Then he watched for the fair Lavinia; but after John Brooks's sister descended a monstrous stout lady, perspiring in a purple shot silk, with a long, black wrought-lace veil to her bonnet, which the wind caught and so enveloped her that she was a long time in getting untangled and being able to alight at all. Then came two gentlemen, with columnar necks stiffly set in high stocks, and a little girl with tight braids of flaxen hair tied with blue ribbons standing out at right angles, and dragged at the hand of her mother, then an elderly and thin woman in black who greeted a young man with a burst of soft tears, and divers others. At last the stage was emptied, the driver gathered up his reins and drove away, and there was no fair Lavinia. Brooks's sister had entered the house with the rest, and Harry approached him hesitatingly. Brooks shot a queer sidewise glance at him. He was switching with his slender cane a clump of heartsease which grew beside the path.

"Your sister came alone," said Harry, and he also switched with his cane at the heartsease.

"Yes, Harry; the fair Lavinia has, what one

so fair should be exempt from, an attack of the quinsy, and the doctor thought it not safe for her to take the journey."

Harry's face fell. He did not look at his friend, whose face was full of high enjoyment.

The two presently began pacing up and down before the house, and again Brooks descanted upon the charms of Lavinia Creevy, and poor Harry's face lengthened more and more because she had not arrived. Then appeared Eliza Brooks, gayly arrayed in a shot silk of olive green, wearing a fine gold chain with a locket, and a high shell comb. Although so much like her brother, she was so fair a copy of him that she almost seemed a beauty beside him. She courtesied prettily to Harry, and there being yet some time before supper, she strolled down the road with him, while Brooks went back to the house. John Brooks's sister Eliza echoed to the full her brother's praise of Lavinia Creevy. She said even more, were it possible, and enlarged greatly upon her accomplishments and sweetness of disposition.

"And there she lies at home suffering with a quinsy, the sweetheart, while I am junketing abroad," said she. "I would not have come had she not so sweetly urged it upon me, and had not dear Aunt Elizabeth, who is so good a nurse, been with her and also urged it. Dear

"SHE COULD SING MANY A SONG LIKE 'MARY OF ARGYLE'"

Lavinia, she even wept at the thought that I might lose my pleasure upon her account. Never was such a darling and such a beauty."

When Harry Fielding seated himself at the supper-table by the side of Eliza, he had no thought for the light biscuits and preserves and cakes and tea, and cream in silver jugs. He had no thought for any one or any thing except that fair Lavinia Creevy, although now and then he looked with a kindly glance of good-fellowship at Isabel Done, and saw to it that she was well served.

Isabel looked to the mind of John Brooks, and the minds of many others, wonderfully fair in a gown of canary-colored silk, cut low enough to reveal the beautiful nape of her neck. After supper she was surrounded, and especially when it was discovered that she had a sweet voice, and could sing many a song like "Mary of Argyle" and "Sweet Afton," accompanying herself upon the little piano inlaid with mother-of-pearl. Harry sat in a window-seat with Eliza Brooks and listened, and talked between the songs, and always the talk turned upon the fair Lavinia Creevy, although at last Eliza spoke of Isabel Done. "How the young men cluster about her! It is like bees around a cherry blossom," said she.

Harry gave a start and a quick frown, and

looked at the cousin whose fair head gleamed dully among her swarm of admiring swains. Then his face relaxed as Eliza spoke again of the fair Lavinia. "Rather, I should say, as young men flock around Lavinia Creevy," said she, and was upon her favorite topic again, while Harry listened with intense interest, although now and then his eyes wandered towards Isabel in her window with her cluster of admirers around her.

After Isabel had played and sung again, Harry turned to Eliza. "Can Miss Creevy play music?" asked he.

"She plays the harp like an angel," replied Eliza, fervently, but she shrugged her shoulders a little and her eyes wandered towards the other young men. Presently she slipped away —although Harry gazed ruefully after her, for he wished to hear more of the fair Lavinia— and sought her brother. He was about to seek Isabel Done, but he turned at his sister's touch on his arm. "John, John," whispered Eliza, "find me some one save that youth, some one who has not so much fancy and sharper eyes. I have not worn my best gown for nothing, nor my gold chain. I will not be looked past for Lavinia."

John laughed again, and stayed, with a touch on the elbow, a youth who was on his way to

Isabel. "William Preston," said he, and the young man stopped, although with a passing annoyance. However, when John presented him to his sister, and Eliza made a pretty courtesy, and flashed her shrewd bright eyes at him, and smiled, he was not at all ill content, and followed her to another window-seat, and quitted her not during the whole evening, nor indeed for long for his whole life, since they were affianced soon after, and married when he had completed his college course.

Harry Fielding, being left by Eliza, sat a moment by himself hesitating, then he also sauntered over to his cousin, and sat down upon the outskirts of the throng. He could barely see the dull yellow gleam of her head, and occasionally the soft flash of her blue eyes, and the turn of her cheek as she spoke in answer to some question.

John Brooks came and sat beside him, but gradually pushed his way into the inner circle. Harry looked after him with a frown. For some reason he did not like it that John Brooks should so openly admire his cousin. Presently, therefore, he, too, almost rudely, forced his own way to Isabel, and spoke to her with almost harsh authority. "Isabel," said he, "pray come with me. I have something to say to you."

But Isabel looked at him gently and pleasantly, and answered in her sweet, low voice with a question. "What is it, Harry?" said she. "Cannot the matter wait until to-morrow?"

"No, it must be to-night," replied Harry. He felt his face flushing before the half-indignant, half-wondering eyes of his mates, but Isabel rose without another word and followed him amid the crestfallen young men.

"Whither would you take me, Harry?" asked she, and there was a slight reproach in her tone, but at the same time a tender cadence.

"Come out and walk up and down before the house with me; 'tis pleasant moonlight," replied Harry.

"No, that I cannot do," said Isabel, firmly, "for it would make talk, and I am here alone with no older woman."

"But you are as my sister, Isabel."

"I am not your sister," said she, curtly. "Come and sit with me in yonder window-seat, and say what you have to say if you cannot wait until to-morrow."

So saying, Isabel settled herself with a soft flirt of canary-colored skirts in a window-seat, and Harry sat beside her, but was silent for a moment. Isabel looked away from him, and spoke first. "Well, what is this so important

matter, Harry?" said she, and her ivory cheeks were flushed with the faintest rose.

Then Harry spoke, not even looking at her, and began asking, with a fine assumption of anxiety, as to the cause of his father's not coming.

Isabel tapped the carpet with her little foot, the rose faded from her cheeks, and she answered with veiled impatience. "Why, Harry, I have told you," said she. "The *Lone Star* from the Indies has but just come on, and your father had reason to think something wrong with the cargo and could not leave. Was that why you brought me over here, with such an assumption of high authority before your friends? I will not have it so again."

"Nay, but, sister," said Harry, catching at a fold of her canary skirt, which she immediately released gently but firmly, "I think it not entirely proper for a young woman to be so beset with young men."

"More proper than to be beset by one," replied she, with a toss of her head; "but you can remain and protect me, Harry, for, faith! I see them all coming this way again."

As a matter of fact, the whole bevy of admirers were nearing her with straggling steps. Harry frowned, but he remained and listened to what he esteemed the most foolish speeches

from his friends. However, he could find no fault with Isabel, for she bore herself with such modesty that it would have seemed prudery had it not been for her gentleness and kindness. Still, Harry was annoyed, for he had wished to have her to himself, that he might confide in her concerning the fair Lavinia Creevy. Isabel had a power of grave understanding and sympathy, and he anticipated much comfort and encouragement from her. He had no thought of confiding in his father until all was settled. A stern man was Harry's father, Deacon Cyrus Fielding, and withal had a vein of whimsical humor and sarcasm which further intimidated. But Isabel was different. He could look to her, he was confident, although she seemed somewhat contrary that night, for the fullest sympathy and assistance when once he should confide his secret to her.

Harry sat beside the girl, with the soft canary-colored folds of her gown touching his velvet knee, and thought of the fair Lavinia, and his thought was like a sacred song. His whole being was filled with such a rapture of bliss that he became glorified in his own realization of himself. He knew himself as the lover and worshipper of that marvellous Lavinia, and it was as if he had never known himself before. He held his head high. He listened with con-

tempt to the talk of his mates. He thought how differently he would talk to Her. But when Isabel spoke he considered that no doubt the fair Lavinia had a voice to the full as sweet and low, and as full of maidenly dignity as hers, He glanced at Isabel's delicate little hands, and knew for certain that Lavinia's would not be one whit less delicate and taper-fingered, and he thought that Lavinia, who doubtless had a fine taste for the adorning of such a lovely person as hers, must of a surety possess a canary-colored silk gown. It seemed to him that he could not wait until he returned to Boston to confide in Isabel; he hoped for an opportunity to do so the next day. But not one moment could he secure until the morning after their return, when his father, who was an importer of East India goods, had gone to his place of business, and Isabel was about her usual morning tasks, one of which was the cutting of a loaf of sugar into regular blocks. This was never intrusted to the black servants, lest they be tempted to purloin the precious sweet. Isabel that morning was cutting the sugar in an arbor in the great garden behind the house upon the bank of the Charles. Harry had inveigled her there, for the sake of privacy, carrying the sugar and the implement for cutting. There was a table in the arbor, and a bench

running around the sides. Harry sat beside Isabel on this bench, and she began her task, and the shadows of rose-leaves, so young that they turned silvery in the wind, were over them, and the sweetest odors of flowers were all about, and the singing of birds, and beneath all the racing ripples of the Charles, which gleamed in the distance like a silver ribbon studded with diamonds. Harry hesitated. Isabel cut the sugar, and it was long before Harry could make up his mind to speak. Finally he did, looking away from Isabel.

"I have something which I have long wished to say to you," he began, and Isabel's cheeks flamed and her firm hands cutting the sugar trembled. "It is about a wonderful lady of whom John Brooks told me," he continued, and Isabel's cheeks assumed their wonted hue and her hands were as steady as ever.

"Yes?" she said, with the loveliest and sweetest tone of interrogation, just as Harry had known that she would speak.

Then Harry began with his mad raving about the fair Lavinia: that maid whom he had never seen except through another man's account of her. He poured out his love for this unencountered divinity with no restraint. Not a muscle of Isabel Done's beautiful mouth twitched. If her eyes twinkled with the absurdity of

this headlong male of her species he could not see, for her lids concealed them, so intent she was upon her sugar-cutting.

Harry raved on and on. His cheeks burned, his blue eyes gleamed. He made gestures with his nervous hands. "How shall I get to see her? For, oh, Isabel, I think I shall die if I see her not soon!" finally stammered out this foolish youth. And with that down on his knees he went and hid his face in the creamy folds of the girl's gown.

Isabel put forth one of her hands and pushed gently but firmly his head away. "Rise, Harry," said she. "It is over-familiarity, and I like it not."

"But, Isabel, you are as a sister to me."

"I am not your sister, Harry."

"But you seem like one; and, Isabel dear, the fondest wish of my heart is that my fair Lavinia may speak like you, and be like you in character; and, Isabel, you must always dwell with us, for I could never bear to live apart from you, in such brotherly affection I hold you." With that down went Harry's head on her lap again and he was half weeping.

Isabel started and looked at the head in her lap with a curious expression of mirth, of bewilderment, and anger. "But, Harry," said she, "it does not seem to come into your mind

that the poor Isabel Done may also have her chance to wed and have her own home."

Then it was Harry's turn to start. He raised his head and stared at her with such consternation that it was all she could do to avoid downright laughter. "But — Isabel," stammered Harry, "how can I keep house without you?"

"But you will have your fair Lavinia, Harry."

"But I have always had *you*, Isabel!"

"That is the very reason why you should have me not. Why should I be debarred from wedding, and remain a spinster all my life? Am I so monstrous to see?"

"No! For, oh, Isabel, I hope — nay, I am sure—that Lavinia will have a look like you, from what John said. But her hair shines like gold and her checks are as rosy as if painted; and, oh, Isabel, you must live with us! But, oh, I have never seen her yet; and, oh, Isabel, how shall I see her?—for I shall die if I do not soon. Such a longing is in my soul that you dream not what it is."

"Remove your head, Harry."

"Why? For you are like a sister, and the hunger for Lavinia is less sore when I am near you."

"For all that, remove your head, for I like it not, and it is simple enough for you to see her.

Harry raised his head and gazed eagerly at Isabel. "How?"

"Miss Eliza Brooks invited me to spend a week with her in Whitfield this summer, and she said, moreover, that her brother would invite you, Harry."

"Oh, Isabel!" panted Harry.

"I declined," said Isabel "Still—"

"Oh, Isabel, write and tell her that you will go, for my sake," pleaded Harry, "for I shall die if I see her not soon."

Isabel made a little impatient movement of her shoulders as she cut the sugar. "People do not die so easily," said she; "but if your heart is so set upon it, I will write to Miss Eliza Brooks and say to her that upon reflection I accept her kind invitation if she sees fit to renew it."

That very afternoon Harry Fielding took a letter folded and sealed to the tavern whence the Whitfield stage started. Then in due time came a letter from Miss Eliza Brooks, and also one from John, and it was settled that in midsummer Harry and Isabel should spend a week in Whitfield.

Such a store of flowered waistcoats and fine shirts he had that his little hair trunk could scarcely be closed. Isabel had made many shirts for him and daintily hemstitched linen handkerchiefs.

One day Deacon Fielding came upon the girl as she sat sewing for Harry in the arbor; the young man himself, who had been mooning about the fair Lavinia, had retreated down a box-alley towards the Charles at the sight of his approaching father.

"Why not take a few stitches for yourself, Isabel?" said Deacon Fielding.

Isabel smiled and took another dainty stitch. "I have all I require, thanks to your generosity, and all my needle-work was finished in the spring," she said.

"Even if it be so, better stitch for yourself, or for some man who has eyes in his head," said Deacon Fielding.

Isabel tried to laugh gayly. "Indeed, sir, your son has eyes," she said.

"Eyes which see not," returned Deacon Fielding, with a glance at the slender form of the dreamer disappearing down the alley, and another of acuteness at the girl, who looked exceedingly fair to him, as she sat sewing with the leaf-shadows playing over her. "There are those who see and yet know not that they see, and those who only come to know the real through dreams," he added. "Maybe my son is of that kind."

Isabel blushed until the soft red tinted all the ivory of her face and neck. She bent her

head low, but there was a mischievous tilt to her mouth.

The next day she and Harry started for Whitfield. Harry sat beside Isabel in the stage and dreamed all the way; but once he gazed admiringly at his cousin, who looked wondrous fair in her travelling-gown, and whispered in her ear. "I am sure that my Lavinia will resemble you, Isabel," he said, and Isabel laughed, although a little sadly.

A grievous disappointment was before Harry Fielding, for when they reached Whitfield, John Brooks drew him aside and whispered that Lavinia Creevy was not at home. "I know it will be a sad disappointment to you, Harry," John said, "but it was only this morning that she went by stage to Sharon to nurse an aged great-aunt who lies ill of a fever and lives alone."

"When will she return?" asked Harry, pitifully.

"Not while you are here, and for much longer," replied John, "for her aunt has a slow fever."

When Harry sat down to the well-spread supper-table he glanced at Isabel, and knew that she had heard the sad news. He received in return a look of the sweetest commiseration, and as soon as she could draw him apart after

the meal, a consoling word. "'Tis too bad, Harry," said she, in a whisper.

"I had so counted upon it, Isabel."

"Do not despair, for I will invite Eliza and her brother and your Lavinia to visit us."

"Oh, will you do that, Isabel, and before I go to college?" cried Harry.

"Hush!" said she. "That I will. Take heart, Harry."

But even that fine plan miscarried, for Eliza and John indeed paid the promised visit to Boston, but the fair Lavinia did not come; she was so wearied, they said, with the nursing of her great-aunt, who had died of the fever, and left her only two silver teaspoons and a mourning-ring, that she was unable to take the journey. So Harry missed yet again seeing his fair Lavinia, and in his distress he did not notice John Brooks's infatuation for Isabel. Indeed, Eliza helped to conceal the fact, for she was ever at Harry's elbow talking about Lavinia and increasing his mad imagination and desire for her, that her brother might have his chance to talk alone with Isabel. The afternoon of the day before they returned to Whitfield, John Brooks, coming upon Isabel in the arbor, spoke his mind, and went down on his knees before her and asked her to marry him. But to his astonishment she answered

not even courteously, but turned upon him in a sudden anger strange to see in her.

"Think you I see not through your wiles, Master John Brooks?" she cried, her face flaming.

John Brooks stammered in reply that he knew not what she meant.

"Well you know what I mean, you and your sister Eliza," cried Isabel. "I would not be discourteous to a guest, nor treat with ungraciousness an honest man who does me the honor to ask me to be his wife, but well you know what I mean, and Isabel Done weds with no man who stoops to subterfuge to win her."

"What mean—you?" stammered John again.

"'Tis an idle question you ask, since you know, but if you will have it, here it is: there is no fair Lavinia Creevy, and you but invented the tale for a jest, and also—and also—" Here Isabel herself stopped short and paled, and tears stood in her eyes.

But John Brooks gazed at her, and there was nothing save honesty in his prominent eyes. "You wrong me, Mistress Done," he said, fervently, "for as I live there is a Lavinia Creevy, and she lives with us, as I have said."

Isabel's pale face grew rigid as the dead. "Are you speaking the truth, Master Brooks?"

"I am speaking the truth," declared John

Brooks, "and Lavinia Creevy lives, and I have not made a jest of Harry by pretending her existence, and—"

"But you cannot deny that you have so descanted upon her fairness for—a purpose," said Isabel; but she stammered again, and again the color stained her face.

Brooks regarded her curiously. His face fell. "I descanted upon the fairness of Lavinia before I had ever seen you, Mistress Done," he said, "and you have but to ask Harry."

"I need not ask Harry," replied Isabel, in a lifeless tone, and again she was pale. "I have no interest in your fair Lavinia, except, of course, pleasure that aught so wondrous fair should grace the earth. Your word as to her existence is sufficient, Master Brooks; but as to the other which you asked of me, I crave your pardon if I have done you an injustice, and thank you humbly for the honor, but your wife I cannot be. I have no wish to wed. I am more content with a single life and shall be more content."

"Then it is—" began John Brooks, rising and staring at her with a sort of repressed fury. But she stopped him.

"Not another word," said she. "'Tis naught to you nor any other man why I remain unwed,

but thee I should wed not in any case." Then she was on her feet and moving away with a stately tread.

Harry wondered why John Brooks was so silent that night and unlike himself; but when they met a few weeks later at Harvard, fair even then, he was the same as ever, ready with a jest and a quibble and singing still the praises of the fair Lavinia. Harry stood well in his class, in spite of the ever-present and ever-ungratified romance of his heart. He graduated with high honors, but even his graduation was marred of its glory, because of the absence of the fair Lavinia, on whose appearance he had counted most confidently, having been disappointed in meeting her through all his college years.

He was so sadly taken aback by his disappointment that on his return home Isabel Done was at her wit's end to comfort him. So distraught was he, sighing and sleepless and composing poetry, which had but small merit, and threatening to relinquish his chosen profession of the ministry and go to the world's end, shipping before the mast if his father forbade him to go on business, that poor Isabel herself was almost distracted.

One night, after Harry had gone to his room and could be heard pacing overhead, Deacon

Fielding spoke to Isabel. "I doubt if my son has a call," he said; "so restless and so ill at ease he seems that I doubt it much."

"Oh, sir," Isabel cried, eagerly, "I doubt it not at all."

"I have questioned him well concerning his belief in the doctrines," pursued Deacon Fielding, "and so has Parson Ackley at my request, and we doubt. He seemeth exceedingly weak and even of a rebellious spirit concerning some points. He has too many romantic imaginings and too little of the steadfastness of faith which regards not itself. I question whether it be not wise to give up the dearest wish of my heart — to see my son standing in the pulpit preaching the Word to the ungodly—and send him to the Indies for sugar and molasses."

But Isabel pleaded hard, saying that she had no doubt whatever of Harry's calling, and Deacon Fielding agreed to wait a few days before making a decision.

The next morning Isabel proposed to Harry that she should paint a miniature of the fair Lavinia according to his and her conception of her, and Harry snatched at the suggestion as eagerly as a child. "Think you that you can do it, Isabel?" he asked. "I know you have a pretty skill at painting—as pretty, perhaps,

as Lavinia herself—but think you that you can do it?"

Isabel replied that she could but try: that she had heard the fair maiden described so often that it seemed verily to her as if she were before her very face.

"And so it seemeth to me!" cried Harry, wildly, and his blue eyes blazed wistfully at Isabel's face, which was strangely and palely beautiful as ever.

So it happened that in some three days' time Isabel came to Harry with a miniature, and she mentioned not how she had painted it standing before her looking-glass, and her heart beat wildly as she showed it to him. But Harry snatched at it. "'Tis she herself!" he cried, and gazed with rapture. It was the miniature of a great beauty, rosily tinted as to cheeks and lips, with a color as of rose on pearl on tip of chin, and eyes like blue gems, and hair shining like gold. "'Tis wonderful!" cried Harry, and he kissed the miniature in a transport, while Isabel's face was at once distressed and triumphant.

The miniature was painted on a small oval of ivory, and Harry had it set in gold and wore it always around his neck, concealed by his linen, which Isabel had stitched, and it was such a comfort as never was to the childlike man.

Straightway, in spite of another disappointment as to seeing in verity the fair Lavinia—for it had been arranged that he and Isabel were to visit Whitfield during the summer, and John wrote of a disastrous fire which had destroyed part of the house, and the spare bedrooms being flooded with water and all the plaster and paper off—he said no more about the Indies. He began his theological course in the autumn with zealous spirit. The possession of the miniature had seemed to assure him of the ultimate possession of his dream. "Sure am I now that my prayers will be answered, and that I shall at last see in the flesh my fair Lavinia," he said to Isabel on his first homecoming. Harry's faith remained intact, although he was always disappointed in his plans for seeing the fair Lavinia during his stay at the theological school. Always something happened to prevent it. Still, he was not unhappy, and he stood foremost in his class. It seemed finally as if his whole soul became beautified and purified by the non-possession of that which he adored, and he was kept free from all the temptations which might have beset his youth by his fine imaginings. He obtained a fine pastorate in Boston, upon the strength of a trial sermon full of doctrines and yet redolent of angelic love and faith and patience.

When he received his call to the Boston church and had accepted, he came to Isabel with a determined expression upon his face.

"Wilt pack my portmanteau for me, Isabel?" he said.

Isabel looked up at him and paled. She was sitting at work in the south parlor of the Fielding house. There were two windows facing the street, and between them stood a great century-plant.

"Where are you going?" asked Isabel. As she spoke she looked past Harry at the great century-plant, and it seemed to her that there was something unusual about it. Even in the midst of her sudden pain and distress she wondered if it were going to blossom.

Harry answered with a firm voice. "I am going to Whitfield," said he. "I am going to Whitfield to see Lavinia Creevy."

"Very well, Harry, I will pack your portmanteau," said Isabel, in a quiet voice. "God grant that you find her this time, and find her all you have wished for so long."

Harry stared at her. "What is the matter, Isabel?" he said, anxiously.

"Nothing; but I think the century-plant is going to blossom," said Isabel, folding her work. Then she went swiftly out of the room to pack Harry's portmanteau, and it was not half an

hour before she bade him farewell at the front door.

Harry took her hand, which was soft and cold, and then he looked at her suddenly with a look which she had never seen before in his eyes. "After all," he said—

"What, Harry?"

"After all, I have a mind not to go, Isabel."

"Nay, go you must, Harry," said Isabel, "and may God speed you."

When she told Deacon Fielding upon his return that night whither Harry had gone, he frowned, and laughed, and frowned again. He had overheard Harry in some of his wild ravings, and had long since guessed at the truth. "When he returns from his wild-goose chase perhaps he will chase swans," said he.

Isabel blushed. "He may find the lady, and find her all that has been said," she replied.

"It is time the boy grappled with truth instead of cobwebs," said Deacon Fielding, sternly. "He has his call, and to a fine pastorate, and this vaporing—"

"It may not be vaporing."

"God grant it may be, for I would have—" Deacon Fielding stopped his speech and held out his Canton-china cup to be refilled.

Harry returned the next night from Whit-

field. Isabel, sitting with her work at the window, saw him coming. She looked strangely changed, for with a few slight touches she had altered the whole character of her own rare beauty, making it of quite another type. A faint touch of rouge was on her cheeks and lips, her thick, fair eyebrows were pencilled, and she had dusted her hair with gold-powder so that it glittered in the sunlight. Before her stood the century-plant, and upon it was now quite evident a bud ready to burst into blossom. Isabel gave a great start at sight of Harry coming up the street. He walked briskly and his head was up and he did not look downcast. Isabel rose and went out of the room into the front hall, with its beautiful spiral of stair, and opened the front door and stood waiting. She realized a faintness as of death itself, but she stood still, framed in the doorway, knowing that the happiness of her whole life hung upon the chance of the next moment.

Harry approached the door and saw the girl standing there, and a great wave of amazement overspread his face.

"Well," said Isabel, "did you find the fair Lavinia, Harry?"

"Yes," replied Harry, still staring at her as if in a dream, "I found her."

"And is she so fair?" asked Isabel. She trembled in all her limbs, but her voice was quiet and firm.

"Yes, she was fair," replied Harry. "She is a great beauty, Isabel, and she is as John said."

"Then it was not a jest?"

"A jest at first, for John sought to amuse himself with me, knowing how easily my heart might be turned by my imagination, but afterwards no jest, for—for John loves you, Isabel, and he would fain have had me turn to Lavinia, for he—he feared—"

"Never mind what he feared," said Isabel, in a dull voice. "So you found her fair, and all the miscarryings of plans to meet her were true?"

"Yes, they were true, and—Miss Creevy is a great beauty, such as the world has seldom seen, but—Isabel—"

"But what, Harry?"

"She is not the Lavinia of whom I have thought all these years. I could love her not, Isabel, even if she could love me." Harry again stared at Isabel, and now upon his face was a strange look as of one who awakens. He followed her into the parlor like a man in a dream. He drew the miniature from his breast and gazed at it, then at Isabel. "It is

your face," he whispered, breathlessly. "You are the fair Lavinia, Isabel."

Isabel gave a short gasp. She was trembling from head to foot. "Wait, wait, Harry!" she panted, and ran out of the room. When she returned the rouge was washed from her fair cheeks and the gold-dust was shaken from her hair. Then she stood before her cousin, her head hanging. "There was paint on my cheeks and there was gold on my hair, and I am not the fair Lavinia," she said, pitifully, and yet with a certain dignity.

Harry stood regarding her. "Oh, Isabel," he said, "it was your miniature, and it was you whom I loved and I knew it not. I sought her afar, and all the time she sat on my own hearthstone, so near that I saw her not. Can you ever forgive me, Isabel, and can you ever love a man who has been so blind?"

"I would that I *were* the fair Lavinia," said Isabel.

Then Harry caught her in his arms. "You are the fair Lavinia," said he. "You are forever until death do us part, and after if such be the will of God, my fair Lavinia."

AMARINA'S ROSES

AMARINA'S ROSES

IN the deep yard in front of and in the deep garden behind the old Deering house was a marvellous growth of roses. There were all the old-fashioned varieties. There were the sweet-brier, the hundred-leaved, the white, the deep red, the Scotch blush roses, prairie-roses, and rose-peonies — which last are, of course, not roses, but may reasonably be considered gigantic symbolisms of them. Amarina herself was a marvel. She had a wonderful blondness, although she tanned instead of freckled in the sun. But there was something about that soft creaminess of tint which her skin—as that of her foremothers' had done—assumed in the summer-time which had a beauty beyond that of mere pink and pearl. Through this creamy tint was always to be seen on the cheeks a flush of rose; and her eyes, which were brown, shaded into the cream, and her lips were crimson. There had been many intermarriages in the Deering

family. Amarina's own parents had been distantly related, but she was an instance of endurance instead of degeneration. She was as perfect as one of the roses in her garden, which had come of the reproduction of many generations of bloom. Amarina had outlived her immediate family, and lived alone with an aged great-aunt and two old servants. She was nearly thirty, and had never had a lover. But it was not held in the least to Amarina Deering's discredit that she remained single, for it was universally conceded that there was nobody in the village who could have aspired to her hand without presumption. She was set up on a pedestal like some goddess, and if she realized a loneliness thereon nobody knew it, for she had the pride of her family.

Amarina's great-aunt was very old, but she seemed to have attained a pause of longevity at the summit of her hill of years, and time now seemed to make no further impression upon her. She was dim-sighted, dim of comprehension, and very hard of hearing, as she had been for years; she had never been married. Living with Amarina's great-aunt Margaret Deering was scarcely like living with an animated person, but the girl was fond of her, and tended her with the greatest care.

Amarina at almost thirty was to the full as

lovely as at eighteen. People said that she did not change in the least. And in truth there was little difference. She looked as truly the same as the new roses which appeared blooming on the perennial stalks of the old ones in the garden every June.

However, when Amarina neared thirty she began to think of putting on caps.

All women, as a rule, of that age wore caps. One summer afternoon she got out some fine old lace and muslin, and sat on the porch beside her great-aunt fashioning a cap. The old woman cast a glance at the filmy stuff which Amarina was manipulating.

Amarina answered the look as she would have answered a question; she had come to understand her aunt's silences as she would have understood speech. "I am getting near thirty, Aunt Margaret," said she, "and I thought I might as well be getting some caps ready." She laughed as she said it—and there was not the slightest bitterness in her laugh, which was that of one amused with Time while she makes concessions to him. The old woman looked away from Amarina and the cap, and her eyes took on an odd blank of remembrance.

Amarina continued to gather the lace and sew it to the muslin. She wore that day a lemon-colored muslin gown, and her fair hair fell in

curls all over her neck and shoulders. Out of them looked her round face, slightly browned by the sun, with the rose-flush on the cheeks, and the brown eyes which still regarded the world and life itself with the surprise and trust of youth.

Suddenly a man entered the gate at the end of the yard and came up the path between the rose-bushes and rose-peonies which bordered it. Amarina glanced from her work at him with a gentle surprise. The old aunt did not seem to see him at all. She was trying to recall her own first cap, which she had donned at thirty.

The man approached the porch; he lifted his hat and spoke quite familiarly, with a pleasant, almost mischievous, laugh. "All the pink roses are in bloom in the yard," said he, "but the one yellow one blooms on the porch."

Amarina arose and confronted him with a slight hauteur. "Sir?" said she.

"Then you have forgotten me," said the stranger. "Well, I will forgive you; there are many bees, but only one rose."

"I will admit that you have the advantage of me, sir," Amarina said in her sweet, slightly formal manner.

"Well, why should you remember?" replied the man. "It was ten years ago that we met, but the years have flown over your head like

a flock of humming-birds. I am Alonzo Fairwater."

A flash of recognition came into Amarina's eyes. Alonzo Fairwater was the distant cousin of her one girl friend, Alicia Day, who lived three miles away in a tiny suburb of the village, which was named for her family—"Day Corner." It was seldom that Amarina saw Alicia, since she herself was kept at home by the care of her aged aunt, and Alicia was away the greater part of the year in the city. She was a beauty and a belle. Some called her handsomer than Amarina, although she too had never married.

Amarina courtesied, and motioned Alonzo Fairwater to a chair. "Yes," she said, "I beg your pardon. I remember you now; but ten years is a long time."

"Not for you," replied Alonzo Fairwater, seating himself, with eyes of open admiration upon the girl's face.

"You are visiting at Alicia's?" said Amarina, again with a slightly haughty air.

The young man explained his presence with an odd eagerness. It seemed that he was out of health, and country air had been recommended, and he had come on a visit to the Day homestead. Alicia was away, as Amarina knew, but Alonzo said that she was to return the next day. He touched very lightly upon the

subject of Alicia, but said a great deal about the beauty of the village and the sweetness and health-giving properties of the air.

As the two sat there, with the silent great-aunt in the background, a young man crossed the front yard with a rake over his shoulder. He cast one glance, which was almost surly, towards the group on the porch, and only dipped his head slightly in response to Amarina's salutation, which was as marked as if he had been any gentleman coming to call upon her.

"Who is that sulky swain?" asked Alonzo Fairwater, in a voice so loud that the young man must have heard; but he continued without turning his head, and was soon seen moving about, tossing up the newly mown hay in an adjoining field.

Amarina colored. "He is one of my neighbors, Mr. Thomas Hetherly, and he makes hay on my land on shares," she replied.

Fairwater gazed with a sort of supercilious amusement at the young man moving in a green and rosy foam of clover and timothy. "It is very early to make hay, is it not?" he said.

"Very early," replied Amarina. Then Martha, the wife of old Jacob, the two being the servants of the Deerings, came out with a tray on which were a squat silver tea-service

and a plate of little cakes; and nothing more was said about Thomas Hetherly.

However, after Alonzo Fairwater had taken his leave and the sun was low, Amarina gathered up daintily her lemon-colored skirts and crossed the yard, and approached the haymaker. Thomas Hetherly stopped when he saw her, and waited with a sort of dignity which sat well upon him; for, in spite of his working-clothes and his humble task, he was a masterly looking fellow of great height, and with a handsome face so strong as to be almost stern.

Amarina smiled pleasantly, albeit a little timidly, up at him from the cloud of her yellow curls. "How do you get on with the hay, Mr. Hetherly?" asked she.

"Very well, Miss Deering, considering the size of the field."

"It is good hay weather," said Amarina.

"Very good."

Thomas's replies were almost curt. He looked straight at her beautiful face with a sort of defiance—the defiance of the original man for the wiles of the woman.

Amarina turned away, then she hesitated. "That gentleman who was sitting on the porch is Alonzo Fa rwater," said she.

"Yes; I knew him. I saw him years ago," replied Hetherly, quietly.

Amarina hesitated still. A deep pink overspread the cream of her cheeks. "I know you must have overheard what he said," she faltered. "I am sure he meant no harm, and I hope you do not think—"

Hetherly turned from her and gave the hay a little toss. "I think nothing at all about it," he replied.

"I am very glad," said Amarina, with a curious meekness, for she had a proud soul, and she had met, in a sense, with a repulse.

"I did not intend to be surly towards you," said Thomas Hetherly, tossing the hay steadily, "and as for anything else, I never store in my mind what was not meant for my ears."

"I am very glad," said Amarina again, and still with that curious meekness. Then she was gone, skimming the stubbed surface of the field in her lemon-colored gown as lightly as a butterfly, and Thomas Hetherly continued his work until the sun was below the horizon and the stars were shining; then he went home. He was poor and lived alone. All his life until the last year he had been burdened with the care of his father, who had suffered with a terrible incurable disease, and who required not only great care, but great expense. When he died, the small Hetherly estate was heavily encumbered, and Thomas was working to clear it.

When he reached home he built his kitchen fire, set the kettle on, then washed himself and changed his clothes. He did so on account of Amarina Deering's daintiness, and because he could not bear to compare himself to so much disadvantage with the fine gentleman who had sat on the porch with her that afternoon. After his simple supper he sat down on his front door-step, and looked across the street at the old Deering house.

It was a strange old pile, a conglomeration resulting from the tastes and needs of succeeding generations of one race. Nearly everybody who had dwelt in it, since the original founder, Amarina's great-grandfather, had added something to it. It was a multiplication of the first simple theme, a house of eight square rooms on two floors. Now there were ells and outbuildings, and rooms opening from one another by unexpected steps, and the stairs and doors were in such numbers that they were a matter of jest in the village. The whole was an immense aggregation of the tastes and needs of different individuals of one race, consolidated in brick and wood and plaster. There was, however, a singular unanimity about the house in the midst of variety. It was, in reality, harmonious architecture, although not of any known school. And the deep front yard and garden in the rear,

with their rank growths of roses, carried the harmony further still, and Amarina, the true daughter of the race, raised it to the utmost pitch. Amarina's very name illustrated curiously the tendency of her family to compound and conserve. Her grandmother's name had been Amanda, her mother's Marina, hers was Amarina. There had been no strictly new name in the family for generations, and there had been hardly one new thing in the house.

Alonzo Fairwater, who came often, found a charm in this conservation of the graceful old. He viewed the furniture: chairs with harp backs, the spindle-legged piano, the gilded candlesticks, dangling with prisms, on the mantel; the pictures, darkly rich and mysterious old paintings in heavy dull frames, steel-engravings of ultra-delicacy, and pencil drawings made by Amarina's ancestresses—and all fascinated the man, who had an æsthetic nature. Nothing which had ever entered that old house, except the people who had dwelt therein, had ever departed from it. And yet they had not been a niggardly race—not with money; they had always been free with that. It was only with that which money had bought that they had been chary. It was as if their possessions had acquired for them a worth beyond their intrinsic ones, and became a part of their in-

dividuality. Amarina's great-aunt Margaret Deering, dull as she was, would have aroused to enough life to break her heart had she been deprived of aught of her old store, although nothing seemed very clearly present with her in the aged dimness of her mind.

Alonzo Fairwater had called upon Amarina many times before she fairly remembered the first cap which she had donned when she passed out of her girlhood. Then suddenly, one evening, when she and Amarina and Alonzo were all in the sitting-room, and Amarina was embroidering a handkerchief by the light of a candle in a tall silver stick, and Alonzo sat near, watching her with half-bold, half-furtive admiration, the old woman remembered, and when she did remember, the tears rolled down her withered cheeks as if she had been a child.

Amarina looked up and saw the tears, and, dropping her work, ran to her. "Why, dear Aunt Margaret," said she, "what is the matter?"

"It had three rows of thread lace, and there was a bow of lilac ribbon," sobbed the old woman.

Alonzo stared, and the thought came to him that the old soul had clean lost her wits, but Amarina spoke soothingly. "What was trimmed with three rows of thread lace and a

bow of lilac ribbon, dear aunt?" said she; "and why do you weep about it?"

"Three rows of thread lace and a bow of lilac ribbon," repeated the old aunt, and she sobbed aloud.

"On what, dear aunt?"

"On my cap, my first cap that I wore when I was turned thirty," wailed the old woman.

Alonzo Fairwater turned his face aside and laughed a little, but Amarina regarded her aunt with entire sympathy. "Yes, I understand, dear Aunt Margaret, now," said she, and indeed she did understand as no one of alien blood could have understood.

"And the lace dropped to pieces, although I mended it carefully, and the lilac ribbon bow faded, and it is all gone," sobbed old Margaret Deering, and she wept as if at the memory of her dead mother or her dead sister or her dead self. Amarina soothed her, Alonzo Fairwater could not help thinking, like an angel. She called Martha, and the old woman was led off and put tenderly to bed, after she had been given a cup of spiced cordial.

Alonzo Fairwater rose. "It would be worth while being old and feeble if one could have such care as yours," he said, and his voice trembled a little, but Amarina only laughed. She accompanied him to the door, and they

"HE SEIZED AMARINA'S HAND AND KISSED IT"

were standing in a stream of moonlight which poured into the old hall, when suddenly he cut his speech short—it was of the probable weather the next day—and seized Amarina's hand and kissed it. "Oh, Amarina!" he sighed out, but she drew back.

"Sir!" she said.

Alonzo Fairwater moved away from her farther into the stream of silver moonlight. "Forgive me, I beg you," he murmured, and went quickly down the path between the rose-bushes, which were then past their bloom.

Amarina when she was in her own chamber that night reflected. She had no doubt that Alonzo Fairwater loved her, that what he had said and done was equivalent to a declaration of love, and that he would follow it up by more precise avowals on the first opportunity. She had no doubt, but no rapture. She considered the matter gravely, its advantages and disadvantages. While she was doing so, lying in her little white bed, stiffened with strenuous thought, a light shone in her eyes from a window of the Hetherly house opposite. Then directly her heart leaped to an understanding of itself, and at the same time to indignation with herself. She understood that if the question had been of marriage with Thomas Hetherly, such careful weighing of consequences would

have been almost out of her power, but she was merciless with herself because of it. In the first place, Thomas Hetherly had manifested no inclination to marry her, and she accused herself of indelicacy at the imagination of such a thing. In the second place, the women of her race had never married a simple, poor man like him, and the conservatism which was born with her held her like chain armor. She was a creature of an almost majestic maidenliness. She pressed back the involuntary leap of her heart, and reflected upon the subject of marriage with Alonzo, as if it had been an embroidery pattern. Although she had a keen mind and a vivid imagination, the real significance of marriage itself, except as a matter of custom for which she had hereditary instincts, and an estate which it became a woman to enter, and which was held somewhat to her disparagement to miss, was scarcely present to her consideration at all.

Amarina fully expected that Alonzo Fairwater would present himself the next day and make a definite proposal for her hand; the dignity of the Deering women had never been affronted with a scene like that of the night before except with such a sequel. All the time she reflected, but was not able to make up her mind concerning her answer, for, whether she

would or not, the gleam of that candle of Thomas Hetherly's seemed to send her thoughts adrift, and the image of him drove the image of the other man from her heart.

But the next afternoon, instead of Alonzo, Alicia Day came in the Day coach, and she was out in a swirl of purple and gold-shot silk, for she was of a dark and splendid beauty and fine raiment became her, and she delighted in it. A bird-of-paradise plume curled around her hat, and her wrought veil of yellow lace drifted to her waist before her lovely face as she ran up the path between the rose-bushes to Amarina hastening to meet her. "Oh, Amarina!" sighed Alicia.

"Dearest Alicia!" said Amarina, and she held her in her arms and kissed her fondly. Then she led Alicia into the house and the best parlor. Alicia sank into a corner of the sofa, drawing Amarina down beside her. "Oh, Amarina!" she sighed again, and the brilliant flush upon her cheeks deepened, and her dark eyes shone with tears.

Amarina laughed. "This is the second time you have said that, and what ails you, sweetheart?" said she.

Alicia glanced up at Amarina in a sweet confusion, like a rose in a gale of wind. "I know it," said she. "I am silly as I never thought

Alicia Day could be, but I am silly because I am happy as Alicia Day never expected to be happy, dear." Alicia had tossed back her long veil, and her glowing, beautiful face was framed by the floating lace flowers. Her blush mounted to the soft black curls on her forehead. "Cannot you guess what makes me so happy, dear?" she whispered.

After all, Amarina, in spite of her almost frozen maidenliness, was a woman. A blush mounted high on her own cheeks, and she cast down her brown eyes. "You are betrothed," she whispered.

Alicia hid her face on her friend's shoulder. "Yes," said she, "I am betrothed for some months. Next year at this time I shall be wed, and you shall be bridesmaid, Amarina."

"Who is he, sweetheart?" asked Amarina.

Alicia laughed with utter exultation of bliss. "Who could he be but Alonzo Fairwater?" said she. "Oh, Amarina, I have loved him ever since I was a child, and thought there was no one like him, and something came betwixt us, and my heart broke, but now it is all over, and we love each other and are to be wed. But why do you say nothing, Amarina?"

"I wish you joy, sweetheart," replied the other girl, and her voice was strange, but Alicia in her excitement did not notice it.

"Joy I shall have, pressed down and running over," said she. "There never was a man like him; I thought you might guess, dear, since you knew he was here, for he has told me that he paid his respects to you, since you were my friend, although he has been pining for my return. I was obliged to remain in Boston for Elizabeth Ware's wedding. But how little you say, Amarina!"

Amarina roused herself, and she spoke fervently, although dissimulation was new to her. "I hope you will be very happy, dear," she said.

"Happy!" repeated Alicia. "Oh, Amarina, did you ever see a man to equal Alonzo?"

"Not in your eyes, dear," replied Amarina, evasively.

Then Alicia laughed gayly. "I verily believe that you have seen some one who looks in your eyes as Alonzo does in mine," said she. "Own up to me, sweet."

But Amarina paled and sobered, and Alicia could get nothing from her. That evening, when she and Alonzo were sitting alone, she said that she suspected that Amarina had herself lost her heart to some one, and that she hoped that such happiness as she herself had might come to her, for she had but a dull life alone with her old aunt. They were sitting

in the moonlight, and Alicia could not see the expression on Alonzo's face, but it was one of both pain and triumph. "I do not see who he can be," said Alicia, reflectively; "there is no one here for her. Do you not think her very beautiful from what little you have seen of her, Alonzo?"

"Very beautiful," replied Alonzo, with a slight tremor in his voice, which Alicia did not notice. She had the entire trust and confidence of a great beauty who had always seen men at her feet.

The next afternoon, when Amarina was seen driving up with her aunt in the old Deering coach, Alonzo Fairwater, who had always esteemed himself brave as men go, did what some might have considered a cowardly thing. He stole softly down the back stairs, and across the garden into a thick wood behind it. Therefore, when Alicia sent to call him, he was not to be found. "I thought Alonzo was in his room," said Alicia, "but he must have gone out."

Amarina murmured that she was sorry to miss the pleasure, but her beautiful lips curled with covert scorn. She was thankful for once for her aunt's dulness, which prevented her from any betrayal of Alonzo's frequent calls upon herself.

It was not long after that that Alicia and

her mother went away to visit the Fairwater family near Boston, and of course Alonzo went also, and it so happened that Amarina saw Alicia but seldom for a year, when it was June again and the wedding-day at hand. The Day farm remained for the greater part of the time in charge of the farmer who managed it, and Alicia and her mother remained away. Alicia was fond of gayety, and she was preparing her trousseau in Boston. Then, too, Alonzo, who was a lawyer, had an important case, which kept him closely confined in the city.

In the mean time Amarina had had her own experiences. It was as if Alicia's betrothal had furnished her with a key-note to which she could not help but pipe and sing, whether she would or not. She began to be cognizant, as she had never been before, of Thomas Hetherly's comings and goings, his house being distinctly visible from her sitting-room windows, especially when the leaves were off the trees. In the winter-time Thomas Hetherly had little work to do, except the care of the few creatures which comprised his live-stock. She watched him in the frosty mornings, with furtive eyes turned from her embroidery, going back and forth between the old red barn and the well with buckets of water. Then she watched him with a book under his arm of an

afternoon, setting forth for the village library. The village library was but a poor affair, and that set her thinking of her father's study, the walls of which were lined with books—not new ones, but of a rare selection. Then one afternoon Mrs. Ephraim Janeway, a neighbor, came in to call. She was an elderly woman with the eye of a fox, and the whole village was as an open book to her, in which she read to others' discredit and her own glory. It was this woman who spoke of Thomas Hetherly and his haunting of the village library. "'Tis said he is bound to read it all through," said she, "but to my mind he would not have such a hunger and thirst for books were it not that Prudence Emmons has the charge of them." This Prudence Emmons was a widow to whom the charge of the little library had been given to eke out her scanty income, and she was considered very fair to see.

Amarina flushed angrily. "It seems hard if a man cannot indulge a love for good books without a suspicion of that kind," said she. She spoke in a soft voice, and took another stitch in her embroidery, but she was angry.

Mrs. Janeway was shrewd and never affronted willingly. "Well, it may not be so," she admitted. "I heard it at the sewing-circle the other afternoon, and one can never tell what

the truth is when women are gabbling together; but the library is old, and Mrs. Prudence Emmons was always one whom gentlemen favored, and she has lately taken to going without caps, and she will never see thirty-five again."

After Mrs. Ephraim Janeway had gone, Amarina went up to her own room and stood before her looking-glass and pulled off her own cap with an impatient gesture, and when her yellow curls, being set free, tumbled about her face, she shook her head defiantly. "I will wait until my face be thirty years old before I crown it with a cap, and let them say what they will," said she, quite aloud.

That evening, when the old servant-woman Martha was out in the kitchen with her husband, she said to him that she wondered if Amarina had anybody in mind, because she had left off her cap, but the old man was smoking stupidly his after-supper pipe, and shook his head with a mumble meant to express his ignorance. It was the very next afternoon that old Jacob came to her and told her, with a chuckle half of amazement, half of suspicion, that Amarina had asked him to step across the road to the Hetherly house and ask if Mr. Thomas Hetherly would do her the favor to call some evening on a matter of business. The old man eyed his wife roguishly for approbation

at his discovery of a confirmation of her own suspicion, but she replied to him angrily.

"Good Lord!" said she, "are you gone clean daft? Think you for one moment that one like her would favor one like him? Not a college-learned man in his whole family, and he himself without money enough to do anything but travel in the same track his father and grandfather went before him. 'Tis a good young man enough he is, but when it comes to a husband for Amarina Deering—" The old woman made a gesture expressive of the utmost contempt.

"She sends in December to see about mowin' the fields!" said old Jacob, and he chuckled openly.

"What of that?—the Deerings were always beforehand with their plans," returned Martha, sharply.

Still, when Thomas Hetherly did not obey her mistress's summons for some ten days afterwards, she waxed indignant. "I would like to know who he thinks he is," she said to old Jacob. "One of the Hetherlys not to run as fast as his feet could carry him when one of the Deerings, and a lady too, sends for him!" But old Jacob was smoking his pipe again after supper, and he only grunted in reply.

Amarina herself was somewhat surprised at

Thomas Hetherly's lack of haste to call in response to her request. The very first evening after it was sent she had curled her hair carefully and put on her brown silk, and an embroidered collar with a cameo brooch. The next evening she had so arrayed herself again, and the next after that she had put on a crimson silk which had been said to become her. Every evening she had arrayed herself, with a view to Thomas Hetherly's appearance, and not one item of her furbishing had escaped old Martha.

It was that very evening when she had inconsistently complained of his non-appearance that there came a tap on the old knocker, and Martha pulled off her apron to answer it. "He has come," said she.

Old Jacob roused himself. He removed his pipe, which he seemed to suck with the blank content of an infant.

"To see about mowin' of the hay in December!" said he, and chuckled. But his face sobered at his wife's fierce glance, and he resumed his pipe while she went to the door to admit Thomas Hetherly.

Amarina looked a little shy as she arose to welcome Thomas. The old aunt had retired. Thomas had made no preparations for his call on Amarina. He wore his every-day clothes,

which were neat and whole, although coarse. Still, he was a splendid figure of a man, and he dominated his clothes as he stood there returning Amarina's greeting. He had come, in fact, with a curious inward sulkiness and revolt of pride. But no man could have found any fault with his reception, which was as punctilious as towards any gentleman in the land.

"I pray you be seated, Mr. Hetherly," said Amarina, and she indicated with her long, slim, white hand a chair which was in some sense the chair of state for a caller. But Hetherly remained standing.

"I thank you," he said, "but I have not long to stay, and I will not sit if you will be so kind as to tell me your business with me."

Amarina colored. She herself felt the absurdity of sending for Thomas on the only errand which she had been able to devise. She hesitated a moment. "I wished to ask you if you had any objection to farming my land on shares as you did last year?" she said, timidly, and she saw the young man's start of surprise, and colored to the roots of her yellow hair.

"None in the least," replied Thomas Hetherly, and with that he turned to go, but Amarina stopped him. She had come quite close to him, and she held one of the silver candlesticks in her hand.

"I wanted to ask," she said, "if — if you would not like to borrow some books from my father's library. There are a great many, and I should be very glad to loan them to you."

Thomas's own face colored. "Thank you," he replied; "but I get books from the library."

His voice was fairly curt, but Amarina continued. Somehow the curtness pleased her better than subservience would have done.

"But the village library is small," said she, "and I have heard the books were not well chosen, and if you wished—"

"Thank you," said Thomas again, "but I find very good books in the village library."

Amarina tried to look at him haughtily, but the benefit thrust back upon her in such wise hurt her, and in spite of herself her voice had a piteous tone. "Very well, Mr. Hetherly," she said; "it was only that I saw you going to the library for books, and I had so many, and I thought—"

Then suddenly Thomas's own face softened. In thinking of it afterwards he saw himself as a churl, instead of a man well aware of his own individual worth, and the slight estimate in which it was probably held by this girl of a gentle race. "Thank you," he said, "and perhaps, since you are so kind—"

"Pray come directly into the library with

me," cried Amarina, eagerly. She held the streaming candle high, and Thomas followed her out of the warm sitting-room and through the length of the icy hall into the library. Amarina moved close to one of the book-lined walls, holding the candle. "Please make your choice," said she, "and please take as many as you like."

Thomas Hetherly stood scrutinizing the books over which the candle-light played uncertainly. The room was very cold; his breath and Amarina's mingled in a cloud of smoke.

She held the candle here and there that Thomas might see the old books the better, and her face was radiant, and her cheeks began to glow with the cold. The windows were expanses of white frost-work which sent out here and there sparkles like diamonds where the light from the candle struck them. The books which finally Thomas selected felt like blocks of ice to his hand. Amarina scudded before him to the sitting-room, and he followed her, but he did not accept her invitation to sit down. That night, after Amarina went to bed, the light of his reading-lamp shone in her face. She had in her heart the pleasant warmth of a kindly deed to one beloved, although she still never seriously entertained for one moment the possibility of marriage with Thomas Hetherly.

It was not because she scorned him, for Amarina had in one sense a humble heart, but simply because he seemed to her of another sort. She regarded him, when it came to a question of mating, as a bird-of-paradise might regard a sparrow. None of the Deerings had married any but men with liberal educations and of gentle antecedents. Thomas Hetherly's father, before his health failed him, had been the village painter, and many a time when she was a child she had seen him in his stained white clothes perched on a ladder before her own house. His illness had been due to the poison in the white-lead, and Amarina had heard from Mrs. Ephraim Janeway that he had made Thomas promise on that account that he would never take up his father's old trade.

"He could have made a better living at it," Mrs. Janeway said; "I don't believe Thomas more than makes two ends meet, though I hear he sold a good deal of honey last year." Thomas kept bees, and a long row of hives stretched behind his house.

In a week's time Thomas returned the books, and took two more home with him, but he did not accept Amarina's invitation to be seated. The almost churlishness of his manner had gone, but instead was a pride before which Amarina's own shrunk, fairly dwarfed.

"I'd like to know who Thomas Hetherly thinks he is?" said old Martha, one evening, after he had taken his books and gone. She had entered the sitting-room on an errand about breakfast. "Anybody would think he was a prince to see the way he acts."

"Nonsense," said Amarina.

"He holds up his head as if there wasn't anybody in the country quite good enough to speak to him," continued Martha; "and what is he? He just grubs along on that little land, and farms yours on shares, and keeps bees. H'm!"

"He has a good deal of book-learning," said Amarina, blushing, and timidly yet dignifiedly on the defensive.

"He ain't college-l'arnt. What college did he ever go to, I'd like to know?"

"He has read a great deal, and taught himself a great deal. He can read Greek and Latin, and he has studied mathematics."

"H'm!" said Martha again.

When Martha was out in the kitchen she sat down by the other side of the stove with a face so glum that even old Jacob dropped his peaceful pipe to stare at her and inquire thickly what was the matter.

"I know what is the matter," said old Martha. She was a very large woman, and her small

eyes rolled with unwarranted accusation at her husband from the placid curves of her disturbed face.

"What's to pay?" further asked old Jacob.

"Girls don't leave off caps when they're turned thirty, and put on silk dresses, and stand hours in freezin' rooms a-holdin' candles for young men to pick out books for nothin'; that's what's to pay," said she.

"You don't think—"

"I think that when a body can't get a sweet grape, a body will take a sour sometimes rather than no grape at all," returned Martha; "and to think of old Abel Hetherly's son a-holdin' up of his head when he comes, as if he was the lord of all creation!"

"Abel Hetherly was a good man," remarked Jacob. Old Abel Hetherly had been one of his boyhood friends.

"Of course he was a good man. I'd like to know who's sayin' anythin' agin' him," returned his wife, crossly; "but, Lord! who's his son, to come over here puttin' on sech airs, and she a-dressin' of herself up as if the President was comin'? Her blue and white plaid silk on to-night. Lord! Thomas Hetherly's mother never had but one silk dress in her life, and that was a cinnamon-brown one that made her look as yaller as saffron, and she was laid out

in it. Thomas Hetherly ain't used to women in silk dresses, and he ain't no call to come and hold up his head so high afore them that wears them. What if he does know a little book-learnin'? What's book-learnin' to an old family like the Deerin's? They're above book-learnin', and always was. They had books jest as they had bread and butter, but they was above 'em. Books is nothin' but ideas, and not true at that, most of 'em, printed and put betwixt covers, but folks is folks. Lord! Thomas Hetherly and one of the Deerings, an' he a-seemin' to look down on her at that. If I was her mother I'd give her a piece of my mind."

Amarina continued to dress her hair prettily, to go without her cap, and to don a becoming gown on the evenings on which she expected Thomas Hetherly might come. However, all this time, Thomas never presumed upon the privilege which most men might have esteemed offered to them. He never lingered a moment beyond the time necessary to choose his books. And Amarina never acknowledged to herself that she would have it otherwise. Now and then there was a word or two between them, mostly with regard to the weather, and that was all, save that now and then there was a look in Thomas's eyes when he regarded Amarina, which caused her to lower hers quickly,

and him to turn his away with something of brusqueness, for the truth was that he was angry with himself for yielding to the spell which she, unwittingly or not, cast upon him, with her fair face and her gentle, high-bred ways. And yet in time he came to have a defiance of his own humbleness, and he argued with himself that whether his worldly estate fitted him to be her mate or not, yet his love as a man was worthy of her esteem, and that he should be lacking in self-respect did he shrink from avowing it to her. So it happened that in June, when the roses were in blossom, and Alicia Day had come home, and, in fact, the wedding was the next day but one, he sent Amarina a letter, and this was the letter:

"Dear Madam Amarina Deering,—He who indites the following does so for the sake of his own self-esteem, believing that although his worldly estate be inferior, and an insurmountable obstacle to his union with you, yet the affection which he cherishes in his heart for your graces of face and mind renders him the equal of any man, and that he confesses himself less than himself if he fails to avow it. I therefore beg leave to inform you, madam, that I love you and you only, and shall so love you until the day of my death, and I tell you this asking for naught in return, and even scorning aught in return, as a giver may scorn reward, and I remain your obedient servant to command,

"Thomas Hetherly."

When Amarina received this strange letter, she read it and locked it up in her little desk, and reflected upon it. There was something in the haughty attitude of this poor lover who scorned to woo which she seemed to understand as she had before never understood anything in another human soul. Amarina reflected upon the letter while she finished her bridesmaid gown for Alicia's wedding. She made over an old India muslin which had belonged to her mother, and the fancy had seized her to embroider over the pattern in colors. She therefore went, with colored embroidery silks, all over the delicate patterns of the muslin, until it was blooming with garlands of bright flowers. The gown was low cut, but there was an embroidered scarf to wear over the neck, and Amarina wore a wreath of tiny rosebuds twisted among her curls. On the day of the wedding she set out a long time before the hour appointed, since she was to assist in dressing the bride. She had with her, laid carefully on the seat of the coach, a great bouquet of bride roses, gathered from her garden, and tied with white lutestring ribbon, and the bride was to carry it. Amarina had seen but little of Alicia lately; Alonzo she had not seen at all. Whenever she thought of him it was with a shame and scorn which was almost vindictive,

but with no love. She had never loved him, but she had, in response to his wooing, placed herself in an attitude of receptivity towards love, and for that she found it hard to forgive him.

When she reached the Day house, Alicia's mother, as graceful and fair to look upon as a spray of lilacs in her shimmering lilac satin, came to meet her, and her gentle face was pale and distressed. "Oh, my dearest Amarina!" she cried, "I am so glad you are come, for something very sad has happened to us, and I am looking forward to you, and you only, to set matters right."

With that she drew Amarina wondering after her into the house, and into the great parlor all trimmed with flowers for the wedding. And all the house was sweet with flowers and wine and wedding-cake.

"My dear," said Alicia's mother, "she will not be married; and, oh, the disgrace that has come upon us this day, with the guests all bidden and no wedding!"

"What do you mean?" asked Amarina, herself pale and gasping.

"She will not be married!"

"And why?"

"She sits in her chamber, and her wedding-gown lies on her bed, and she will not put it

on nor be married, nor tell any of us why; and I have been looking for you, dear, thinking she might be more open with one of her own age and her closest friend than even with her own mother." And as she said that, the poor lady broke into sobs and lamentations. "Oh, go up to Alicia's chamber and talk with her, my dear," she begged; and Amarina forthwith ran up the stairs, the carved balusters of which were wound with green vines, and entered her friend's chamber. Alicia sat there alone in a rocking-chair, and she was dressed in an old loose gown of sprigged pink-and-white muslin, and her black hair was tumbling over her shoulders, and she was rocking herself violently back and forth, and her beautiful mouth was set in a straight line. But when Amarina entered she sprang up and accosted her with a sort of fury.

"You may have him! you may have him!" said she. "Go down and marry him if you will! Put on my wedding-gown and my veil. Go down and marry him, I say!"

Amarina looked at her friend sternly. "Alicia, what do you mean?" said she.

"Well you know what I mean. 'Tis you he shall wed, and not me."

Then Amarina's own quick temper flashed. "Know you, Mistress Alicia Day, I would not

wed with Alonzo Fairwater if he were the last man in the world!" she cried out, and her face flamed.

"Yes, 'tis you he shall wed, and not me."

"Alicia Day, have you lost your wits?"

"Tell me how many times Alonzo came to call upon you last summer before I returned!"

"I cannot tell."

"Of course you cannot tell, for the times passed count, but Alonzo told me that he called but once to pay his respects. Tell me if he spoke the truth?"

Amarina was silent.

"Tell me if he spoke the truth, Amarina Deering?"

And again Amarina was silent, for she could not reply.

"I knew it," Alicia said, with such an accent of woe that Amarina shuddered.

"Alicia, sweetheart, he did come more than once, but—but he made no—no avowal," stammered Amarina.

"Did he say or do anything that would have caused you any disturbance had you been in my place?—answer me that," demanded Alicia.

Amarina was again silent a moment; then she answered, although she felt in her heart that she departed somewhat from the truth, for as she spoke she seemed to see Alonzo's

ardent eyes upon her face, and feel his lips on her hand. "No," said she.

"I do not believe you," said Alicia. "I have found out that Alonzo was always at your house last summer before my return, and—and the one who told me was passing, and she saw him—she saw him—"

"Kiss my hand," said Amarina, coolly; "and what of that? What does kissing the hand mean? Nothing at all. And I know who told you; it was Mrs. Ephraim Janeway."

"She thought it her duty to tell me, and not let me marry the man with whom my dearest friend was in love, when she was breaking her heart over him," said Alicia, in the frozen, stubborn tone which had come into her voice.

Amarina stared at her. "I am not breaking my heart over him," said she again—"on my honor."

Alicia shook her head.

"Sweetheart, this is nonsense!" cried Amarina, and as she spoke she moved towards the bed on which lay the wedding-gown and veil. "Here, sweetheart, let us have no more of this," she said. "Come here and let me dress you." But Alicia began rocking back and forth again. She was, between her love and jealousy, scarcely sane. Her face was burning and her eyes were wild. "Come here, Alicia," said Amarina,

but Alicia would not stir. "But, sweetheart," said Amarina, so bewildered that she scarcely knew what to say or do, "you would marry him if—"

"Yes, I love him so that I would marry him in spite of everything if I were sure *you* would not."

"I tell you I would not."

Alicia shook her head in her strange, stubborn fashion.

"Come, sweetheart, if you love me, and be dressed," begged Amarina, at her wits' end.

"I tell you I will never wear that wedding-dress, unless they put it on me when I am laid in my coffin and I cannot help it," replied Alicia Day, "unless—"

"Unless what? Do not talk so, sweet."

"Unless I see you happily married to somebody else."

"Then would you believe?"

"Yes, then I should believe," said Alicia.

Amarina stood a moment reflecting. Her face colored rosy red, then she paled. Then she spoke with a strange note of fear and resolution: "Very well, dear," she said. "See me married you shall." And with that she was gone.

Alicia's mother, pale and trembling, caught hold of her white gown as she was going out of

the door. "Where are you going?" she whispered. "Will she?"

"I shall be back," replied Amarina.

"Will she? Oh, what shall I do?"

"She will when I come back."

As Amarina drove away in her coach she had a glimpse of Alonzo Fairwater's face at a window. He looked ghastly white and troubled, and the sight of him strengthened her for her purpose, for she was about to do what no woman of her family had ever done before.

Amarina bade old Jacob drive fast, and it was not long before she reached the Deering house; and she sprang out of her coach, and ran in for her scissors and some white lutestring ribbon, and was out in the garden cutting another bouquet of bride roses, the while old Martha watched her furtively from a window; and when she saw her hurry with her great bunch of white roses to Thomas Hetherly's, she thought she had gone clean mad.

Amarina hurried across the road, and her garlanded dress floated out on either side like the wings of a butterfly; and as she hurried she heard a jangling yet somewhat rhythmic sound, like barbaric music, for Thomas was beating a tin pan behind his house in order to settle a swarm of bees, which were overhead in a humming cluster around their queen.

Amarina paid no heed to the bees, and she ran up to him, and held out the bouquet of white roses; and he, too, forgot his bees, and stopped beating the tin pan, and looked at her, and his face was as white as if he were dead.

"I got your letter, Thomas," said she, in a low voice, and stood extending the bunch of roses towards him, as if it were some sword of maidenhood which she was surrendering. Still, Thomas did not speak; his head was swimming with the perplexity of it all.

"I got your letter," Amarina faltered again, and it was as if she were emerging from an atmosphere in which she had been born into another, which rent her with agony of new life. Yet after a second she continued: "Alicia will not marry Alonzo, because she has learned that he has paid some slight attention to me, and she will have it that my heart is broken," and her voice had the appeal of a child's; "and so—and so—"

Thomas did not speak. He stood holding his pan, and the bees hummed angrily overhead.

"She will not marry him unless she is convinced by my marrying another man," cried Amarina, tremulously. She held the roses towards him, and they shook as if in a gale. "And

so, and so—I came back, and I—have your letter, and—I have made another bridal nosegay, and if—if—"

Then Thomas Hetherly seemed to fairly tower over her. "So you come to me in order that I may save your pride," he cried, "and in order that—" But his words were cut short, for down came the bees in a buzzing mass, and swarmed on the bunch of roses outstretched in Amarina's hand. "Keep still!—oh, keep still for God's sake!" shouted Thomas Hetherly. And Amarina kept still, although she never in all her life forgot that keeping still which seemed to comprise in a few minutes an eternity. She had nerve and courage, for she did not come of the Deerings for nothing; and she held the bunch of roses, which a second before had so shaken, with a clutch like a vise, although the muscles on her girlish arms swelled with the weight and stress, and there was a roaring in her ears above the war-hum of the bees. Thomas ran for a hive, and soon it was all over, and she had not a sting; but she dropped her roses, and put both her little hands before her face and sobbed; and in spite of himself, and influenced thereto by a mightier and more primeval hunger for sweets than those of the bees, Thomas came close to her and took her in his arms to comfort her. "'Tis all over, 'tis all over, and the

bees are in the hive," he said, "and don't be afraid, sweetheart."

"Oh, 'tis cruel, 'tis cruel," she sobbed out; "'tis cruel, Thomas. For I came not because of my pride, but—because I—loved you."

It became one of the village traditions: how Amarina Deering went to seek Thomas Hetherly, and how his bees swarmed on her bridal bouquet, and how he hived them, she never getting one sting, and how he dressed himself in his best, while she went home to tell her aunt, who, it was said, never fairly understood until a week later; and then how Amarina and Thomas drove in the coach back to the Day house, and how hastily the other bride was dressed, and how there was a double wedding instead of a single one, as there will sometimes unexpectedly appear a double rose on a bush of single roses.

EGLANTINA

EGLANTINA

"EGLANTINA, tall and fair,
Queen of Beauty and of Grace,
All my darkened house of life
Is illumined by thy face.

"Shineth thou unto my heart
As the dew in morning field,
When beneath the eastern sun
Gems of Zion blaze revealed.

"Sweet'neth thou my every thought
Like the bud when night hath passed,
And she breaks her seal of bloom
To become a rose at last.

"Though in gloom thy lover sighs,
Eglantina, tall and fair,
Love the Blind hath touched his eyes,
And he sees thee past compare!"

These verses were cut and skilfully colored, illuminated after a simple fashion, on a win-

dow-shutter in the east parlor of the old Litchfield house, in Litchfield Village.

That was Eglantina's favorite room, and there she used to sit with Roger Proctor. Eglantina's father had married for the second time when her mother had been dead ten years, and she was eleven. The new wife had been a widow with one child, Roger Proctor, a little younger than Eglantina. Dr. Eliphalet Litchfield had been jealous of this son by a former husband, and had insisted upon the mother's practically separating from him upon her marriage with himself.

So the boy, who ad been blind from scarlet-fever ever since his infancy, was put to board with a distant relative of his mother's, and was seldom seen by her.

The new wife was scarcely more than a girl, although a widow with a son of ten. She was a mild and delicate creature, whose only force of character lay in loving devotion, and that proved too strenuous for her fragile constitution. She died a year after her marriage, and her little daughter died with her.

Then Dr. Litchfield sent for the blind son of the dead woman, and lavished upon him a curious affection, which was at first not so much affection as a sentiment of duty and remorse. This man, given to fierce strains of

mood, chose to fancy that his young wife's untimely death was a judgment of God for their desertion of her blind son. From the time that Roger Proctor came to live in the Litchfield house his lines were cast in pleasant places. Dr. Litchfield enjoined upon his daughter Eglantina that she was to treat the strange little boy as her own brother, and he himself showed more indulgence towards him than towards her. However, Eglantina needed no such reminding. From the minute that the blind child entered the house, the other child was his willing slave. Nothing was ever seen more appealing to old and young than that little blind boy, Roger Proctor. His hair, which hung in straight, smooth lengths, had a wonderful high light around his head which suggested an aureole. His young face between these lines of gold was an oval so pure that it had an effect of majesty and peace, even in the child. His blind eyes, large and blue, seeming to give instead of receive light, gazed with unswerving directness from under a high forehead of innocent seriousness. Although his forehead seemed almost frowning with gravity, Roger's mouth was always smiling with a wonderful smile, before which people shrank a little. "He looks like an angel," they said. The blind boy gave, as no seeing child could have done, an impression

of light and clearness. Soon his step-father adored him, and as for Eglantina, she worshipped him from the first.

No greater contrast could have been imagined than there was between the girl and the boy. They were of about the same age, but Eglantina was head and shoulders above Roger, though he was not below the usual height. But Eglantina was abnormally tall; her stature was almost a deformity, especially since she was exceedingly slender. And that was not all: crowning that slim height was a head and face unfortunate not so much from lack of beauty as from a mark on one cheek which had been there from birth. A story was told in the village of how Dr. Litchfield's wife had longed for roses in winter when there were none, and talked of the roses which climbed over the front porch in the summer-time, and declared that she could smell them when none were there; and how at last, when Eglantina was born, there on one little cheek was that hideous travesty of a red rose, which she must bear until the day of her death. The mother, who had a strong vein of romance, had called the child Eglantina, and mourned until she died, not long after, because of her disfigurement, and often kissed, with tears of self-reproach and the most passionate tenderness and

pity, the mark on the little cheek, as if she would kiss it away.

Dr. Litchfield ever after hated roses; he would have none in his garden, and the eglantine over the front porch was rooted up. Eglantina herself had an antipathy to roses, and never could she have a whiff of rose scent but that she turned faint and ill. Nothing could exceed the child's sensitiveness with regard to the mark on her cheek. She never looked in her glass without seeing that, and that only. That dreadful blur of youth and beauty seemed all her face; she was blind to all else. She shrank from strangers with a shyness that was almost panic. Eyes upon her face seemed to scorch her very heart. But as she grew older, although the inward suffering was much the same, she learned to give less outward evidence of it. She no longer shrank so openly from strangers; she even endured pitying glances or repulsion with a certain gentleness, which gave evidence to enormous patience rather than bravery. When Roger had been in her father's house some years, she became conscious of a feeling which filled her with horror. She strove against it, she tried to imagine that it was not so, that she could not be such a monster, but she knew all of a sudden that she was glad that Roger was blind. Whenever she

looked at him came the wild, selfish triumph and joy that he could not see her. Her consciousness of this came upon her in full force for the first time one afternoon in August, when she was eighteen and Roger a few months younger. They were crossing a field behind the house, hand in hand as usual, when Roger turned his sightless eyes towards the sorrel, and nodded and smiled as if he saw. "I have made a poem to you, Eglantina," said he.

Eglantina colored until the rest of her face was as red as the rose-mark on her left cheek; then she turned pale, and that brought it into stronger relief. "You must not," she said, faintly.

"Why not? There is no one in the whole world as beautiful as you are, Eglantina."

"No, I am not," she returned, in a pitiful, hesitating voice, as if the truth were stifling her.

"Yes."

"You do not know; you never saw me."

"I have seen you with my whole soul. You are the most beautiful girl in the whole world, Eglantina."

Eglantina shut her mouth hard. She pulled her broad-brimmed hat over her face by the green bridle-ribbon, and cast her disfigured cheek into a deep shadow.

Roger looked at her anxiously. "What is the matter, Eglantina?" he asked, softly.

"Nothing," said she.

When they reached home, she ran up to her own chamber. She went to her little mirror over her white-draped dressing-table and gazed long in it. Then she sank down before it on the floor, in an agony of self-abasement. After a while she rose and pulled the muslin drapery over the glass, and did not look in it again. When she went down-stairs there was Roger's poem cut skilfully on the shutter in the east parlor. Roger could not use pen or pencil to much advantage, but he could cut the letters plainly, feeling them with his long, sensitive fingers. Eglantina held her cambric pocket-handkerchief over her marred cheek, and read every word, smiling tenderly. Then she put the handkerchief to her eyes and leaned against the shutter and sobbed softly. Then Roger came into the room, feeling his way towards her, and she choked her sobs back and dried her eyes. Roger wished to color the letters of his poem, and Eglantina sorted out the colors from her paint-box, and he painted them.

Then, whenever she saw that poem to Eglantina tall and fair, she tried to picture herself as Roger saw her, and not as she really was. She tried to forget the birth-mark, she tried

not to think of it when she spoke to Roger, lest the consciousness of it be evident in her voice, but that she could not compass. She thought of it always, and the more she strove against it the more she was conscious of it, until she grew to feel as if the mark were on her very soul. But her patience grew and grew to keep pace with it. There was in her heart ceaseless torture and suffering, but never rebellion.

Everybody who knew Eglantina spoke well of her. They said what a pity that such a good girl should be under such an affliction, and they also said, when they saw the piteous couple together, the man who could not see and the woman who should not be seen, that there was an ideal match. Eglantina's father began also to have that fancy. He had grown old of late years, and had the troubled persistency of a child for his way when once he had begun to dwell upon it. It was not long after Roger had cut his verses to Eglantina tall and fair on the shutter that he called Eglantina back one evening after she had started up-stairs with her candle. "Eglantina, come here a moment," he said, "I want to speak to you."

Eglantina returned and stood before him, the candle-light illuminating her poor face, which her father had never seen without a qualm of pain and rebellion. That mark was

for him like a blot on the fair face of love itself, and his will rose up against it in futile revolt. Her father looked at her, his forehead contracted, then he turned towards the shutter, and again towards her with a half-smile, while one long finger pointed to the verses. "Have you seen these, Eglantina?" he said.

"Yes, sir," replied Eglantina, gravely. She looked full at her father with a look which was fairly eloquent. "See what I am," it said. "What have I to do with love-verses? Why do you mock me by speaking of this?"

But her father shook his head stubbornly, as if in direct answer to such unspoken speech of hers. "If," he said, with a sort of stern abashedness, for he had never spoken of such things to his daughter—"if your own heart leads you in that direction, Eglantina, there is no possible objection, and I should like to see you settled. I am growing old."

Eglantina, still speechless, raised one arm, her lace sleeve falling back from her wrist, and pointed to her marred left cheek. There was in the gesture utmost resignation and pride, and her eyes reproved her father mutely.

Her father frowned and continued shaking his head in denial. "I still say that under the circumstances there can be no possible objection," he said. "What difference can that

make to a blind man who has learned to esteem you for your own true worth, and has invested you in his own mind with the graces of person to correspond with those of your character?"

Eglantina looked at him. After all, she was eager to be persuaded. "I cannot keep it secret from him," she faltered.

"How can you do aught else? How can you describe your face to a blind man?"

Eglantina continued to regard her father with eyes of painful searching, as one who would discover hope against conviction and find refutation for her own argument.

"Roger has been told repeatedly," said her father.

Eglantina nodded. She herself had told him and he had laughed at her.

"And the telling conveys no meaning to him," said her father. "What does beauty or deformity of the flesh signify to a blind man?"

"I can see, and I can see that which he loves mistakenly," replied Eglantina, in a pitiful voice.

The two stood facing each other, both the father and daughter above middle height, for Eglantina got her height from her father. The two faces were on a level.

"Do as your heart dictates, my daughter," said her father, "and have no fear."

The next day, in the afternoon, when seated in the arbor in the garden with her embroidery work, she saw Roger coming, walking almost as if he saw, with no outstretching of feeling hands. In fact, he knew his way well enough between the flower-beds, being guided by their various odors. Eglantina, watching him approach, swept a great bunch of brown curls completely over her disfigured cheek, and sat so when he entered.

"Pass all the other lesser flowers by until you find the rose," he said, laughing tenderly.

"I am no rose," said Eglantina.

"The rose does not know she is herself, else she would be no rose," said Roger.

"I am a poor mockery of a rose, from this dreadful mark on my cheek," said Eglantina, and she felt as if she were about to die, for it seemed to her that such brutal frankness must convince.

But Roger only laughed. "The rose has a scratch from a thorn on one of her petals," he returned, "or a bee has sucked too greedily for honey. What of it? Is there not enough beauty left? There is no one in the whole world so beautiful as you, Eglantina. A mark on your cheek! What is a mark on your cheek but a beauty, since it is a part of you? Fret no more about it, sweetheart."

Eglantina looked at him, at the beautiful face in a cloud of golden beard, at the sightless blue eyes, and she pulled the curls closer over her cheek and resisted no longer.

It was then the first of September, and it was decided to have the marriage the next month; there was no reason why they should wait, and Dr. Litchfield was disposed to hasten the wedding. Soon the simple preparations were nearly finished. Roger's chamber had been newly papered with a pale-green satin paper, sprinkled with bouquets of flowers. Roger's wedding suit was ready, and Eglantina's gown. The gown was a peach-blow silk, and it lay in shimmering folds on the high bed in the spare chamber, and from the tester floated the veil, and a pair of little rose-colored slippers toed out daintily beside the dimity dresser, and in a little box thereon was a brooch which Roger had given her—a knot of his fair hair set in a ring of pearls.

One evening, after a very warm day, Roger and Eglantina returned from a long walk down the country road and went into the house. They kissed each other in the front entry, then Roger went up-stairs, in the dark, and Eglantina lighted her chamber candle.

But her father called her again, and she went into the east parlor as before, with the candle

throwing an upward light upon her face. This time Dr. Litchfield hesitated long before speaking, so long that she looked at him in surprise, thinking that she had perhaps not understood, and he had not called her. "Did you want to see me, father?" she asked.

"Yes, Eglantina," he replied; but still he hesitated, and she waited in growing wonder and alarm. "Eglantina," Dr. Litchfield said, presently.

"Yes, father."

"Dr. David Lyman is in the South Village. He has been attending the daughter of Squire Eggleston, who lost her sight from scarlet-fever," her father said, abruptly. Eglantina turned white, and gave a quick gasp.

"He will restore her sight," said her father, and he paused. Eglantina was silent and motionless. She stood with her mouth set hard and her eyes averted.

"It might be well to have him see Roger," said her father. He did not look at her.

Eglantina turned and went out of the room without a word. She was awake all night, pleading pitilessly for and against herself, as if she had been a stranger. Monstrous as it might seem, there was something to be said in favor of letting the physician who might restore Roger's sight pass by, and keeping her

lover blind until the day of his death. "If Roger gains his sight, he loses love," she said; "and he is one who, if love go amiss, will come to harm in himself." And that was quite true, for Roger Proctor was a man to be made or marred by love.

"Will he not lose more than he gains?" Eglantina asked herself, and, though her judgment told her yes, yet she dared not trust to her judgment when her inclination so swayed her. Then, moreover, to such strength her love had grown that all the old guilty secret gladness over his blindness was gone, and instead was a great tenderness and pity for her lover that he must go blind and miss so much. "He can see a-plenty that is beautiful if he miss the beauty in me," thought Eglantina; "and who am I to say that no other woman besides me can make him happy?"

But always she went back to the fear as to how he would endure the awful shock when, after his eyesight was restored, he should look for the first time on her face, and see what he had loved and kissed. She thought truly not then of her own distress and humiliation, but of him, and what he would suffer, and she could not argue that away. Then all at once her mind was at rest, for a great and unselfish, though fantastic, plan had occurred to her,

and she knew what she could do to spare him.

The next morning there was an expression in her face which dominated all disfigurement and would have dominated beauty as well.

"When will he come?" she asked her father, when Roger was not within hearing.

"This afternoon, if I go for him," replied her father, with his eyes still on her face, "but you had best not tell Roger until the doctor has pronounced on the case. You had best not hold up hope that may come to naught."

"It will not come to naught," she replied; and after breakfast she told Roger that a doctor was coming who would cure his eyes and he would see.

Roger received the news with a curious calmness at first, but as he reflected a great joy grew and strengthened in his face. Then he cried out, suddenly, "Then I shall see you, I shall see you!"

"Yes," said Eglantina.

"Why do you speak so, Eglantina? Your voice sounds strange."

There was a peculiar quality in Eglantina's voice, a peculiarity of intonation, which made it unmistakable among others, and just then it had disappeared.

"Why strange?" said she.

"It is strange now. Are you not glad that I am to see—to see you, sweetheart?"

"I am more than glad," replied Eglantina. Then she went away hurriedly, though Roger called wonderingly and in a hurt fashion after her.

That afternoon, before the doctor came, Eglantina sent a letter to her cousin, Charlotte Wyatt, who lived in Boston, and who was to be present at the wedding, to hasten her coming. The two were great friends, though Charlotte had visited Eglantina but once, when Roger was away, and so had never seen him, but Eglantina had often visited Boston, and the two wrote frequent letters.

"Come if you can in a fortnight's time, dear Charlotte," wrote Eglantina, "though that be a fortnight before the day set for the wedding, for I am in sore trouble and distress of mind, and only you can comfort and help me." And she wrote not a word with regard to Roger's eyes. And she did not mention Charlotte's coming to Roger.

That afternoon Dr. David Lyman came at Dr. Litchfield's bidding, and the operation on Roger's eyes was performed with great hope of success, though the result could not be certainly known for the space of two weeks, when Dr. Lyman would return and the bandages

would be removed. During those two weeks Eglantina nursed Roger tenderly, and let no trace of her own sadness appear. Indeed, she began to feel that she should have joy enough if Roger regained his sight, even if she lost him thereby, for the blind man was full of delight, and for the first time revealed how he had suffered in his mind because of his loss of sight.

Then, the day before the one appointed for the removing of the bandages, came Charlotte Wyatt, stepping out of the stage-coach at the door—a tall and stately maiden, who was held in great renown for her beauty. Charlotte Wyatt, with all her beauty, bore a certain family resemblance to her cousin. She was of the same height, she was shaped like her, she moved and spoke like her, having the same trick of intonation in her grave, sweet voice. But this resemblance only served to make Eglantina's defects a more lamentable contrast to the other's beauty. It was like a perfect and a deformed rose on the same bush. The deformed flower was the worse deformed for being a rose beside the other.

That night the two girls lay awake all night in bed and talked, and Eglantina told the other her trouble, and yet not all, for she did not discover to her the plan which she had made.

Charlotte held her cousin in her arms, and wept over her, and pitied her with a pity which bore a cruel sting in it. "I do not wonder that your heart aches, sweetheart, for surely never was a man like Roger, and you might well love him better blind than any other man with his sight," said Charlotte Wyatt, fervently. She had not spoken to Roger, but she had peeped into the room where he sat with his eyes bandaged, with Eglantina reading to him. Eglantina shrank from her suddenly when she said that. "What is the matter? What have I said to hurt you, sweet?" cried Charlotte.

"Nothing, dear," replied Eglantina, and held the other girl close in her arms.

"I never loved any man overmuch, though so many have said that they loved me, but I can see how you love Roger," Charlotte said, innocently.

"There is no one like him," Eglantina agreed, and she began sobbing in a despairing fashion, and Charlotte strove to comfort her.

"He will love you just the same when he can see," she said. "Beauty is but skin deep, sweetheart."

"I care not, oh, I care not, so he is not hurt," sobbed Eglantina.

"How you love him!" whispered the other girl. "If he be not true to love like yours, he

is more blind when he sees than when he saw not."

It was the next afternoon that the bandages were to be removed from Roger Proctor's eyes, and it would then be known if the operation were a success. The great doctor and Eglantina's father and the nurse were in the room with Roger. Eglantina and Charlotte waited outside. Charlotte was dressed in a lilac satin gown, falling in soft folds around her lovely height, and her fair hair was twisted into a great knot, from which fell a shower of loose curls around her rosy face; and since she had come away without a certain tucker of wrought lace which she much affected, Eglantina had dressed her in one of her own, taking a sachet of lavender, and she had fastened it with her brooch of Roger's hair set in pearls. The two moved about uneasily.

They listened to every sound from the next room, the doctor's study, where Roger and the two physicians were, and presently out came Dr. Eliphalet Litchfield, not with the gladness of his profession after a successful operation, but falteringly, with pitiful eyes upon his daughter.

"Well?" said Eglantina to him.

"He sees," replied Dr. Litchfield, in a husky voice. He looked hesitatingly at Eglantina.

The door was opened again, and Dr. David Lyman looked out. "He is asking for your daughter," he said to Eliphalet Litchfield.

"Eglantina! Eglantina!" called Roger's voice, high with nervousness. He was too weak to stir; the strain had been severe, and he was of a delicate physique.

"You had best come at once," whispered the doctor. "He has been under a great stress, and it is not advisable to cross him; even his sight may depend upon it."

Eglantina laid a hand with a weight of steel on her cousin's arm. "Go," she said.

Charlotte stared, pale and scared.

"Go," said Eglantina.

Dr. Litchfield made a motion forward, but Eglantina stopped him with a look. She pushed Charlotte towards the study door, and whispered sharply in her ear: "You heard what the doctor said. Don't let him know. Go."

Charlotte went into the room half by force, half with bewildered acquiescence. Then the three outside heard a great cry of rapture from Roger, and Eglantina went away hurriedly, leaving the men looking at each other.

It was nearly time for the stage-coach. Eglantina was waiting for it at the turn of the road. No one had seen her leave the house. An hour later Dr. Litchfield found a letter pinned

"SHE PUSHED CHARLOTTE TOWARDS THE STUDY DOOR"

to his cloak, which hung in the entry. It was very brief: "Dear father, this is to inform you that I have gone to Aunt Pamela's. Do not undeceive Roger at present, and do not let Charlotte. Your respectful and obedient daughter to command, Eglantina."

Eglantina had been with her aunt Pamela a week, when one afternoon came Charlotte riding in the doctor's chaise, herself driving with a pretty skill, holding the reins high, slapping the white horse's back with them, and clucking to him like a bird to hasten his pace. And she, running into Miss Pamela Litchfield's house, and finding Eglantina by herself embroidering in the parlor, in the deep window-seat, caught her round the waist and talked fast, half laughing and half crying. "He will have none of me," she said. "This morning he told me, with as near tears as a man may, that he accounted himself as worthy of great blame, but held that he might be worthy of more did he dissemble. This to me; and to my uncle, your father, he said more. This he said of me—of me, who has had some praise, whether deserved or not, for her looks—that he was disappointed in my poor face, that it was not what he had deemed it to be, that it was less fair. And then I, having heard what he said to my uncle, and being, I will admit, some-

thing taken aback by such slighting—I told him that it was all a deception, that I was my poor self instead of his beloved Eglantina, that she had been unexpectedly called away, and that we had deceived him for his health's sake; and, Lord! had you but seen how he brightened! And now you must go to him, sweetheart."

It was evening when Eglantina and Charlotte rode into the yard of the Litchfield house, and the next morning Eglantina went into the east parlor and stood before Roger Proctor; and a sunbeam from the east window, the lettered shutter of which had been thrown open, fell upon her poor face with the monstrous travesty of a rose disfiguring her cheek; and Roger gave one great, glad cry of recognition, and she was in his arms, and he was covering her face with kisses, and looking at it with ecstasy as if it were the face of an angel. "Oh, Eglantina!" he said. "It is you, sweetheart—you and no other! No other could have such beauty as thine, the beauty I have seen with my soul, and now see with my twice-blessed eyes."

Eglantina lived and died, and her long grave is in the graveyard of Litchfield Village, and at the head is a marble stone on which are cut the verses beginning, "Eglantina, tall and fair."

THE PINK SHAWLS

THE PINK SHAWLS

THE two Crosby sisters, Honora and Ellen, their niece Annette, their deceased brother's daughter, and her brother Franklin were all in the sitting-room the day before Christmas, at work on Christmas presents. Franklin was whittling paper-knives out of whitewood, and sniffling painfully and dejectedly the while. He was only ten, and out of school on account of a cold. He did not like to go to school, but it was snowing hard, and he was eager to be out-of-doors.

Honora was crocheting a shawl of pink wool, Annette was dressing a doll, and Ellen was covering a pincushion with blue silk. Later she intended sticking in pins in letters representing, "To Cora." Ellen was a conservative, and that which always had been seemed the best to her. Pincushions made in such wise had been a fashion of her departed youth. Honora crocheted with her lips set in a curi-

ous way which she always maintained when at work. Annette dressed the doll listlessly. She was a pretty girl, although to-day she looked somewhat wan. A young man, Harry Roel, who had been openly attentive to her, had lately deserted her for another girl. That very afternoon she had seen them pass in a sleigh. She had said nothing, but her aunt Honora had spoken.

"It seems to me folks must be in an awful strait to go sleigh-riding in such a storm as this," said she, with an odd mixture of sympathy for her niece and indignation at the young man.

Franklin considered it a good opening for a plea of his own. He spoke with a hoarse whine. "Can't I just go out and coast down Adkin's hill just twice if I tie my tippet over my ears?" he asked.

"I rather guess you can't," replied his aunt Honora.

"I'll wear my thick coat, and something under it."

"Don't you say another word. You keep on with your paper-knives."

Franklin applied his damp handkerchief to his nose, and the tears trickled down his rasped cheeks. He was a fair little boy, and cold made ravages in his appearance. "I'm sick of these old paper-knives," he muttered.

"No muttering," Honora said, sternly. "Christmas is the one time of the year when we ought to think of other people and not of ourselves. Just look at your aunt Ellen and your sister and me working. Maybe we don't feel any more like it than you do."

Annette, fitting in a fussy little sleeve to the doll's dress, gave a weary sigh. "That is so," she said. "If ever I hated to do anything, it was to dress a doll."

"But she knows how tickled little Minnie Green will be with it," said Honora; "and here is your aunt Ellen making a pincushion for Cora Abbot, and she woke up with a headache; and here I am crocheting a shawl to give away to a lady in Bilchester, when I really need one myself. Christmas isn't the time to think of yourself."

"Pink was always so becoming to you, too," said Ellen.

"It used to be," said Honora. In spite of herself she could not resist placing the fluff of pink wool under her chin and gazing at herself in the glass opposite. Honora was old and her hair was snow white, but she had the tints of youth in her fine skin, and the pink wool cast its roseate hues over her face and thick white locks.

"It's just as becoming as it ever was," said Ellen.

Honora could not avoid a conscious simper at the charming reflection of herself. She had always been covertly pleased to meet herself in the glass. "Well," said she, "I shall have to do without a pink shawl."

Ellen regarded her with a troubled expression. "Oh, dear sister," said she. "I only wish I had thought, for I could have got a pink shawl for you as well as the present I have.

"So could I," said Annette.

"Well," said Honora, in a resigned voice, "I know I shall like what you have for me. It is only that I have always wanted a pink shawl, and I have never seen the time when I felt that I could conscientiously get one for myself."

"You have made so many for other people, too," said Annette.

"Yes, I know I have," agreed Honora, "but it always seemed to me that they needed them more than I did. Here is poor Abby Judd. She has just barely enough money to live on, and she has the prayer-meeting at her house every week since the church burned down, and she has the sewing-circle at least once a month, and her house is always chilly, and she really needs a dressy shawl."

"You are always thinking of somebody else," said Annette, and the remark pleased Honora.

Annette looked very much as Honora had done at her age. Her hair was a brilliant brown, with red lights in it, and her complexion was really wonderful. Annette, as she worked, cast every now and then a glance out at the storm. It seemed to her that she constantly heard sleigh-bells ever since that sleigh with Harry Roel and the other girl had passed. "It's an awful storm," she said, with a half-sigh. This was the night of the week—Wednesday—when Harry Roel had been accustomed to call, and she had always made a wood fire in the stove in the best parlor. She would not need to do that to-night.

The next morning Franklin went about carrying the presents on his sled. He was better, and so wrapped up that he could scarcely walk. He had to carry some of the parcels to the post-office and the express-office, and some to houses in the village. He was usually quite a trustworthy errand-boy, but possibly this morning the quinine which he had taken for the grippe, or the grippe itself, confused his young mind. Instead of taking the pink shawl, which was enveloped daintily in pink tissue-paper tied with pink ribbons, then enclosed in a nice white box, to the express-office, he carried it to Harry Roel's house. Harry lived with his widowed mother, and the maid who came to the door

and took the box could not read English, and she had no hesitation about receiving it.

"This is a Christmas present from my aunt Honora," said Franklin.

The Swedish girl smiled at the beaming eyes above the red tippet. Then she carried the package into the kitchen to her mistress, who was there superintending the pudding. Mrs. Roel was an impetuous soul, and had never gotten over her childish delight in presents. She did not look at the address, but cut the string with the first knife at hand. She unfolded the pink tissue-paper and shook out the shawl.

"Oh, what a pretty shawl!" she cried, "and it's just what I wanted, for I am going to have the sewing-circle next week, and I've got a cold."

Then she spied the card attached to the shawl with pink ribbon, and read, "To Abby Judd, with loving wishes for Christmas and the New-year, from her old friend, Honora Crosby," and her face fell.

"Goodness! this isn't mine, after all," she said. "It's for Abby Judd, in Bilchester. I used to know her. She and Honora Crosby were always intimate. Well, this must be done up again, and when Harry comes in he must take it down to the express-office."

It thus happened that poor Annette Crosby

heard the jingle of sleigh-bells that morning, and she did not know that Harry was carrying the pink shawl which her aunt Honora had crocheted for Abby Judd to the express-office.

In due time Honora received a letter of thanks from Abby Judd, along with a pretty little pious book bound in white and gold. Honora looked very sharply at the book, then she laid it on the table with her other gifts.

"It is very pretty," said she, "and Abby was very kind to send it." There was an odd tone in her voice. Franklin and Ellen were in the room. After Franklin went out, Ellen examined the book closely, then she looked at her sister.

"It's one somebody gave her," she said. "I can see where the name was rubbed out."

"Well, I don't suppose she could afford to buy a new one," said Honora, generously. "She has an awful time to make both ends meet, and, of course, she had read it. All I hope is that the one who gave it to her won't see it."

"That is so," said Ellen. "I made out the name; didn't you?"

Honora nodded.

"It was Mrs. Addison Roel."

"Yes, Etta Roel was the name. She scratch-

ed it out, and I suppose she thought nobody would notice it."

"Well, Mrs. Addison Roel won't be very apt to come in here now," said Ellen.

"That is so," assented Honora.

Ellen lowered her voice. She nodded towards the kitchen, where Annette was making some chocolate creams to please Franklin. "Do you suppose she minds much?" she whispered.

"If she does, there won't nobody know it," said Honora.

She was quite right—nobody did know it. Time went on, and Harry Roel never came to see Annette, and it was reported that he was constant in his attentions to the other girl, that they were engaged, but Annette never lowered her crest. She dressed just as painstakingly and prettily as ever She went everywhere. She did not in the least avoid meeting her old lover and his new sweetheart. People said that she did not care. It was even rumored that Annette had dismissed him, and that he was paying attentions to Laura Ames out of spite. His mother heard of it and told him. She had just come home from the mission circle one afternoon in December; it was a year later than the first Christmas when she had received Honora's pink shawl by mistake.

"I heard something that made me mad this afternoon," she said to her son when they sat together at the tea-table. Mrs. Addison Roel was a very pretty woman, astonishingly young for her age, and when she was excited color flushed her cheeks and her eyes sparkled like a girl's. She was prettily dressed, too, in a lace-trimmed silk waist and a black satin skirt.

"What was it?" asked Harry.

"Well, I heard that Annette Crosby had jilted you, and that was the reason you were going with Laura."

Harry paled a little. He had inherited his mother's good looks, and even her childishness of expression. "Well, maybe it sounds better to have it go so," he said.

"I don't think it sounds any better for you," said his mother, hotly.

"It sounds better for Annette," said Harry, and suddenly his pale face flushed.

Mrs. Addison Roel looked sharply at him. "Goodness! you don't mean to say that you are thinking of Annette now?" she said.

Harry said nothing.

"Well, I'd stick to one thing two minutes," said his mother.

"Maybe I am not the only one to be accused of that," said Harry, gloomily.

"Harry Roel!" cried his mother. "Annette Crosby didn't—"

"Never mind what she did or didn't," Harry returned, and took his hat and went away, leaving his mother staring after him.

"He didn't half eat his supper," she thought; "and there was that chocolate cake he is so fond of, too." She wondered if Annette Crosby had really dismissed her son; she felt an active dislike towards her, aroused by the mere imagination of such a thing. "I wonder who she thinks she is?" she thought; and yet she positively disliked Laura Ames, and the anticipation of having to live with her had really caused her to lose some of her pretty, youthful curves. She had always rather looked forward to living with Annette, who was exceedingly sweet-tempered and a good housekeeper, whereas the other girl was openly called a spitfire, if she was pretty, and she had the name of letting her mother do all the work. There was no servant in the Ames house. However, the possibility of Annette's having treated Harry badly served to partly reconcile her with the other girl. She resolved to ask Laura to tea Christmas day, and it so happened that Annette saw Harry drive past with her as she had the year before.

The Crosbys had their gifts all finished and

despatched; it was four o'clock in the afternoon, and their little tables were spread with those which they had received. Honora had two which rather nonplussed her. Annette and Ellen each presented her with a pink crocheted shawl. When the gifts were displayed, and they saw that each had chosen the same thing for Honora, they at first looked sober, then they laughed, and Honora joined them.

"Well, I declare, I've got pink shawls now if I never had any before," said she.

"It all happened because I went to that church fair when I was in Norcross," said Annette. She had been visiting the married friend for whose little girl she had dressed the doll the preceding Christmas. She had been a little out of health, and they had thought a change might benefit her. "I happened to see that shawl at the fair," said Annette, "and I knew it was just the shade Aunt Honora liked, so I bought it. I was going to crochet one, but I didn't feel quite up to it, and I thought this would do just as well."

"I didn't dream you were going to give her a pink shawl or I would have said something to you about it," said Ellen. "I had made up my mind to give her one, but you know I can't crochet, and I happened to see this one in the

Woman's Exchange in Winchester last November when I went there shopping with Mrs. Green; so I got it. I've had it hidden away ever since. I wish they weren't both the same stitch."

"Never mind. I don't care anything about that," said Honora. "I always thought this was the prettiest stitch there was, and I am delighted with them. It is a great deal nicer to have two, because I shall feel that I can wear them all I want to. If I had only one, I dare say I should have kept it done up in a towel and hardly ever worn it."

"Well, there is something in that," agreed Ellen. She looked admiringly at her sister, who threw one of the shawls over her shoulder.

However, as she sat beside the window, a boy came to the door and left a package for her, and when it was opened her face changed. "I declare, if Mrs. John Eggleston hasn't sent me another pink shawl!" said Honora.

"And it is the same stitch," said Ellen.

Annette, in spite of her troubles, was young, and had a sense of humor. She sank into a chair and doubled over with laughter. In a moment Honora and Ellen joined her.

Honora had a dainty little note enclosing a Christmas card, and she read it. "At all events, Mrs. Eggleston is honest," she said. "She tells

me right out that she had this shawl sent her three years ago from a friend, and she had never worn it, and she sends it to me with Christmas greetings, because she heard me say once that I wished I had a pink shawl."

"Yes, she is honest," said Ellen. "Maria Eggleston always did speak right out."

"Well, I declare!" said Honora, looking at the shawl with an odd expression.

"You will have to wear pink shawls morning, noon, and night," said Annette.

It was not long after that when Franklin came home; he had been sent to the office for the night mail, and he brought several packages, evidently presents for the two aunts and the niece. Honora had two. One she opened at once.

"What a lovely dolly!" said she. "Cora sent it to me."

"What is in your other package?" asked Annette.

Honora hesitated. She sat looking at the unopened package in her lap with an expression of chagrin, amusement, and distress. She had caught a glimpse of rose-color through one end of the parcel. It was not very carefully tied up.

"I declare, it looks like—" began Ellen.

"I do believe it is," said Annette, with a shriek of laughter.

Honora lifted the parcel. "It is light and soft," said she, in a resigned voice.

Then Annette caught sight of the pink color at the end. "It is! it is!" she cried.

Honora opened the parcel and shook out another pink shawl.

"Thank the Lord, it is a different stitch," said Ellen, with a gasp.

"Ellen, you ought to be ashamed, bringing the Lord into it," said Honora, reproachfully.

"Well, I can't help it. I do feel thankful, and I don't see any sin in being thankful for little things as well as big ones," said Ellen.

Then they all looked at the shawl and laughed. Franklin was a little bewildered. He did not quite understand what the laughter was about.

"Aunt Honora has got four pink shawls," explained Annette to him.

Then Franklin bent over with laughter. "Well, she's going to have another," said he. "Willy Bennet's mother is going to give Aunt Honora a pink shawl. I know, because Willy's got a cold and can't come to bring it over, and Mrs. Bennet wanted me to come over after supper and get it. She hadn't got it done up. Willy's mother said she heard Aunt Honora say last year that she wanted a pink shawl, and she made up her mind she should have one."

"I wonder if she made it herself?" said Annette.

"She couldn't have," said Ellen. "Mrs. Bennet doesn't know how to crochet, I know."

"I remember saying to Mrs. Bennet that I wanted a pink shawl," remarked Honora, still with that queer expression.

"Good land! five pink shawls," said Ellen.

"Maybe you will have another," said Annette. "There is a letter you haven't opened, Aunt Honora."

"Thank the Lord, there can't be a pink shawl in that, anyhow," said Ellen.

Honora opened the letter. Then she laughed. "There is something about a pink shawl in it, anyhow," said she. "It's from Sarah Mills, and she was always honest, too. She says she has had a pink shawl sent her for a Christmas present, but she never wears pink, because it makes her look yellow; she doesn't say who sent it; so she is sending it to me by express."

"I begin to feel nervous," said Ellen.

"Yes, there is something awful about so many pink shawls," said Annette. Then she laughed again, her rather hysterical laugh. She was really very unhappy. She did not get over her unhappiness about Harry Roel, although she held her head high.

"Why don't you have a rummage sale and get rid of them?" said Franklin.

"Franklin Crosby, I am ashamed of you," said Honora; "a rummage sale of presents which were given me by my friends! You must remember that when anything is given you there is something sacred about it, because it is not only the thing itself, but the love and kindness that go with it from the giver, and it isn't anything to be treated lightly or to be made fun of. Everything I have ever had given me since I was a girl I have treasured up, and I wouldn't part with them for any money, even if they don't happen to be quite what I need. The need is not the main thing."

Franklin was looking hard at a book which he himself had just received. "Well, I suppose I'll have to treasure up this book," said he. "I had one just like it year before last. I don't want to read it, so I suppose I'll have to treasure it."

"Of course you will," said his aunt, severely, "and you must remember that you treasure up not only the book but your teacher's kind thought of you."

"Yes'm," said Franklin, meekly, with inward reservations. "She gave Willy Bennet a great box of candy," said he. "He's teacher's favorite."

"Nonsense! Miss Lowny is a good woman, and she hasn't any favorites," said his aunt Honora, "and the book cost probably more than the candy."

"No, it didn't," said Franklin, "for that candy is fifty cents a pound, and there were two pounds of it, and they are selling books just like this for twenty-nine cents at White & Adams's. I saw 'em in the window my own self yesterday."

"Franklin Crosby, aren't you ashamed of yourself?" cried his aunts and sister as one.

"I don't see why," returned Franklin, stoutly. He had very good reasoning powers for his age. "I don't see why kind thoughts and a dollar ain't more than kind thoughts and twenty-nine cents. So there!"

"Franklin, you can go out to the woodshed and bring in some wood and start up the fire in the kitchen stove. It is almost time for supper, and let me hear no more of such talk," said Honora, sternly.

However, she could not quite make up her mind to wear the dainty rose-colored things as often as she had planned. It happened that all six shawls, were for the most of the time packed carefully away, each folded in a clean white towel, and that she only wore one, scented strongly with camphor, on a state occasion.

When the next Christmas came, not one shawl was the worse for wear.

"I hope to goodness you won't get any more pink shawls this Christmas," said Ellen. The two sisters and Annette were, as usual the day before Christmas, engaged in finishing up some presents and packing others to be sent. Franklin had some Christmas duties which were much more acceptable to him than usual. He had developed an amazing ability for a boy in making candy, and the fragrant fumes of his concoctions filled the house.

Honora was crocheting, putting the last stitches to a head-tie for Abby Judd.

Ellen was finishing a centre-piece, and Annette was tying up parcels in dainty white paper with ribbons and writing cards with loving Christmas messages. Annette had grown distinctly wan and thin, although she was still pretty. She had heard that very morning that Harry Roel was to be married in the spring. The reflection of that seemed to be pricking her heart all the time while she was doing up the dainty parcels, but she forced herself to talk and laugh as usual. She was prettily dressed, too. She wore a pink cashmere house-dress which she had made herself, and which suited her wonderfully. Her aunt

Honora had looked at her with a little surprise when, after the dinner dishes were cleared away, she had appeared in that gown and settled down to her afternoon work on the Christmas presents.

"Do you expect anybody?" she asked.

"No," replied Annette. "Why?"

"Why, you are so dressed up."

Annette laughed. Her thin, sweet face, under her soft puffs of brown hair, flushed. "Oh, I just took a notion to put this dress on," said she. She did not own the truth, that she wore the dress from a species of self-defiance. Harry Roel had always been accustomed to come Christmas eve, and she had considered that, if things were as they had been, she would have worn that pretty pink dress. Then she said to herself, "Well, I will wear the dress, anyhow." Therefore she had put it on.

She felt her aunts looking at each other with wonder and some suspicion, but she pretended not to notice it.

"I think you had better put on an apron, anyhow, with that dress," her aunt Honora said, finally.

Annette obediently got one of her aunt's aprons from the secretary drawer and tied it around her waist. It was of a sheer white

material, and the pink of her gown showed faintly through it.

It was about four o'clock when a boy was seen racing past the windows. He ran so fast that he was not seen distinctly by any of them.

It was not two seconds before the flying figure again passed the window, and Franklin entered with a neat parcel.

"Here is something Gus Appleby brought for Aunt Honora," said he.

Honora took it, and the others gathered around.

"I wonder what it is, and who sent it?" said Annette.

"Another pink shawl, perhaps," said Ellen. "Honora hasn't had one this year so far."

Honora opened the nice white parcel, and there was disclosed an inner parcel of white tissue-paper tied with pink ribbon. Through the tissue-paper a rosy gleam was evident.

"I declare, it *is* another pink shawl," said Annette.

Honora untied the dainty pink bow, unrolled the tissue-paper, and slowly shook out the pink shawl. She laughed a little, then she looked rather sober.

"Who sent this one?" said Ellen.

Honora took up a card which was tied to the shawl with a bit of narrow pink ribbon.

"'Christmas greetings from Caroline Roel,'" she read. Annette turned pale.

"I shouldn't have thought she would have had the face!" gasped Ellen.

Annette said nothing. She turned again to the table where were the parcels which she was tying up, and she began working on them with her mouth shut tightly.

Meanwhile Honora was closely examining the pink shawl in a grim silence. She opened her mouth as if to speak, then she closed it again; then her desire to reveal something was too much for her. "Franklin, go out in the kitchen," said she, sharply. "I think that candy is catching on."

When the door had closed behind the boy she turned to her sister and her niece. "Do you want me to tell you something?" said she.

"For goodness' sake, what is it, Honora?" asked Ellen, and Annette turned a pale, inquiring face from her parcels.

"Well," said Honora, "I thought at first I wouldn't speak, but I guess I can't help it. This is the very identical shawl I sent to Abby Judd two years ago."

Ellen gasped. "Why, Honora, how do you know?"

"I know," replied Honora, conclusively.

"But how?"

"I know. I made a wrong stitch in the lower left-hand corner, and I have some of the wool left, too."

"I don't believe it."

Honora went majestically over to the secretary. She took out of the lowest drawer a neat little parcel labelled, "Pink wool left from Abby Judd's shawl." "Look," said she.

"Yes, it is the same shade," said Ellen. "Goodness!"

"But how on earth did Mrs. Roel get hold of it?" asked Ellen, in a bewildered fashion.

"I know," said Honora, shortly.

"How?"

"Abby Judd gave it to her for a Christmas present last year."

"My land!" exclaimed Ellen, gazing blankly at her sister.

"It's so," said Honora.

"Why, I can't believe it."

"I can't help it whether you believe it or not; it's so."

Just then there was a ring at the front door-bell, and a sudden hush pervaded the room.

"There's somebody at the door," whispered Ellen, agitatedly. She began gathering up scraps of ribbons and strings which littered the floor and thrusting them into the adjoining bedroom. Honora assisted. "This room

looks as if it were going to ride out," said she, "but whoever it is has got to come in here. The parlor isn't warm enough." Annette hurriedly straightened the things on the table where she was working. Honora peeked out of the side window. "It's she," said she, in a whisper.

"Who?" whispered Ellen.

"Mrs. Roel."

Annette made a motion as if to run from the room, then she tied a little blue bow on a package resolutely.

Honora glanced at Annette. "I'll go to the door," said she, and just as she started the bell rang again. Presently she ushered in Mrs. Roel, who looked fluttered and embarrassed. She did not accept the offer of the best rocking-chair.

"No, thank you," said she. "I can't stop, but I felt as if I must come over." She stopped and hesitated, and her pretty, middle-aged face, looking forth from the folds of a blue worsted head-tie, flushed a deep pink. "I felt as if I must come and—explain," she said again. Then she again stopped and hesitated, and her face was blazing. She glanced at the pink shawl on Honora's table. "I don't know what you thought," she stammered, "and I—I—felt as if I had better come right over here and

tell you the whole story. I felt as if maybe I wasn't quite straightforward, but I didn't want anybody else blamed, and I don't know now, but—well, I can't help it; I'm going to tell you." She addressed herself directly to Honora, and spoke rapidly. "Well," said she, "two years ago last Christmas your nephew brought that shawl to my house by mistake. I opened it before I saw the direction on the wrapper. When I saw it afterwards I did it right up again, and my son carried it to the express-office and sent it where it was meant to go; and then the next Christmas Hannah Mills must have had it sent to her for a present from Abby Judd; at least, that's the way I reasoned it out; and this year—Hannah and I always exchange presents—she sent it to me. Hannah meant all right. She never wore pink; it always made her look yellow; and I don't believe either she or Abby Judd ever had this shawl on their backs. It has been kept just as nice, and it's all scented with camphor. You can smell the camphor, though there was a real strong sachet in with it. I kept the sachet. Well, when I got it I knew it the very minute I set my eyes on it. I never saw such a shade of pink before, for one thing, and I always did carry colors in my eyes very well; and then there was another thing. I always notice every

little thing, and I happened to notice it when I saw it first—a little tiny bit of white in the pink at the neck; you know how it will happen so sometimes. I suppose the dye don't take, and I knew it was the same shawl. And I'll own up I felt kind of mad at first. There I'd worked and made an afghan for Hannah, and she had sent me a shawl that somebody else had given her; and as for Abby Judd, I didn't think much of her giving it away, either. But my first thought was that I wouldn't tell on them, that I'd just see to it that you had your shawl back again. I thought maybe you wouldn't know it was your shawl. So I called in the Appleby boy and gave him five cents for bringing it over. And then I got to thinking it over, and I felt dreadful mean, and as if you wouldn't know what to make of it; and I began to think that Abby and Hannah meant all right, and Hannah always did look as yellow as saffron in pink, and I dare say Abby Judd does, too — she's something the same complexion — and I thought I'd come over and make a clean breast of the whole thing."

Annette, very pale, continued tying her parcels, but, in spite of her pallor and the shock of having Harry's mother in the house, her mouth twitched a little. Honora looked at the shawl,

then at Mrs. Roel, with an inexplicable face; then she laughed.

"It's all right," said she, "but I wish you'd keep the shawl, Mrs. Roel."

"No; you keep it and wear it yourself."

Then Ellen laughed. "Land! I don't see how she's going to," said she, "not if she lives to be a hundred; she's got six more pink shawls she had given her last Christmas."

"Good land!" cried Mrs. Roel.

"Do take it and keep it," said Honora. "I know pink must be real becoming to you."

"Yes, it always was becoming," admitted Mrs. Roel. "It never made me look yellow, but—"

"You've got to take this shawl or I shall feel real hurt," said Honora. She tried to speak pleasantly, but her manner was a little stiff. She could not help thinking how Harry Roel had treated Annette.

"Well, to tell the truth," said Mrs. Roel, "when that shawl came, two years ago, it did look so pretty, and I tried it on, and it was so becoming that I sent right away for some worsted and made myself one. I always loved to crochet. And I've kept it real nice, so it is just as good as new. But I thank you just as much."

"Of course, then, you don't want this," said Honora.

"I thank you just as much as if I took it," said Mrs. Roel. She was going out, with a remark about the weather to make her exit easy and graceful, when she stopped as if she had made a sudden resolution, and turned upon Annette. "Well," said she, "as long as I am here I may as well have it out, and I suppose your aunts know all about it. What made you treat my son so awful mean?"

Annette looked at her. She blushed first, then she looked ready to faint. "I don't know what you mean," she said.

"Yes, you do; you needn't pretend you don't."

"I don't," said Annette. Then she gave way. Her nerves were strained to the utmost. She sank upon a chair and began to weep.

Her aunt Honora came to her rescue. She looked fiercely at Mrs. Roel.

"When it comes to treating mean," said she, "there may be two ways of looking at it."

"Don't, Aunt Honora," sobbed Annette.

"Yes, I am going to have it out, now it is begun," said Honora. "When it comes to accusing you of treating Harry Roel mean, I am going to say something. I call it treating a girl pretty mean when a young man comes to see her as steady as your son came to see Annette, and then goes with another girl right

before her face and eyes, without her giving him any reason."

"She did give him reason," declared Mrs. Roel. "She gave him a good deal of reason—reason enough for any young man if he had a mite of pride."

"I'd like to know what?" said Honora, and even Annette stared inquiringly over her handkerchief at Mrs. Roel.

"I call it reason enough," said Mrs. Roel, "when a young man who has been going with a girl the way my son Harry had been going with Annette sees her coming out of a store with another young man—"

"What young man?" interpolated Annette, curious in spite of herself.

"John Appleby. You needn't pretend you have forgotten."

"I don't know what you mean, and I have forgotten," Annette said, brokenly.

"Well, my son hasn't forgotten. He saw you coming out of Rogers & Gray's with John Appleby, and you had a little package, and when he asked you what it was you just laughed and wouldn't tell him, and made him think it was something John had bought for you—it was two weeks before Christmas—and there you were as good as engaged to my son."

Annette completely lowered her handker-

chief. She looked brighter, although her eyes were still brimming with tears. "I do remember now," she said, "but I have never thought of it since."

"Well, my son has thought of it a good deal, I can tell you that."

"I never thought of it. I did it just to tease him."

"Some folks don't take to teasing easy," said Mrs. Roel. "My son is one who doesn't. He takes everything serious."

"The package was just pink worsted that Aunt Honora sent me for, to finish that pink shawl," said Annette, and in spite of herself she laughed.

"Well," said Honora, with acrimony, "your son consoled himself pretty quick. I don't see as he has much reason to find any fault."

"Who says he consoled himself?"

"Well, I should think he did, if he is going to marry that other girl in the spring."

"He isn't going to marry her. She's going to marry a man out West."

"So she's given him the mitten?" said Honora.

"No, she hasn't," returned Mrs. Roel, angrily. "My son doesn't take mittens. He was never in earnest in going with her, and she knew he wasn't, and he knew he wasn't. He knew all

the time about that other man out West. He has felt used up over the whole thing," said she. "He didn't think that Annette could treat him so."

"I don't see that Annette has done anything so very much out of the way," said Honora. "It looks to me as if all the trouble was your son's having a faculty of bringing his foot down on a fly as if it were a sledge-hammer on a rattlesnake. If a man can't take a little joke, why, he's got to take the consequences."

"Harry always took things just as they were said," returned his mother, but her face was much softer. She looked at Annette. "Are you going to be at home this evening?" said she.

Annette colored. "I am always at home," she replied, in a low voice.

Mrs. Roel turned again to Honora. "It's queer, but it does seem as if that shawl was at the root of a good deal," said she; "I hope you don't think I did anything out of the way coming to you about it."

"I think you did just right," said Honora.

That evening after supper Annette made up a fire in the parlor stove. Her face had changed wonderfully in a short time. She looked years younger. Irrepressible dimples showed in her pink cheeks. She fastened a little pink rosette in her brown hair. She was fairly glowing and

blooming with youth and happiness. About eight o'clock the door-bell rang, and she went to the door. Then voices were heard in the hall, and the parlor door closed.

"It's he," said Honora.

"Yes, it is," said Ellen. "I am glad; the poor child has tried to make the best of it, but she's been real low in her mind, and she has lost flesh. Ellen was examining happily a handkerchief which she had just received in the mail from Hannah Mills. "It's real fine," said she. "If there's anything I do like, it's a real nice, fine pocket-handkerchief."

Franklin was eating one of his chocolate caramels, and enjoying intensely the sweet on his tongue.

Honora looked at the pink shawl which was lying in a rosy fluff on the table by her side. "It seems to me this room is kind of chilly," said she, "and I've a good mind to put that shawl on."

"I would," said Ellen.

"I guess I'll just wear it and get the good of it," said Honora.

"I would, so long as I had so many laid away," said Ellen.

Honora took the shawl and put it over her shoulders. Then she looked at her sister and began to speak, and hesitated.

"What is it?" asked Ellen.

"Will you promise me that you will never tell as long as you live if I tell you something, Ellen Crosby?" said Honora.

Ellen looked wonderingly at her. "Of course I won't tell," said she. "What is it, Honora?"

"Nothing, only I made every one of those pink shawls myself," said Honora.

"Honora Crosby!"

"Yes, I did. I know I am right. I can't quite see how some of them got back to me, but they did."

"Good land!"

"It's so. I don't suppose I shall ever know the true inside of it; but there's one thing sure —my friends did want to give me something I wanted for a Christmas present, if they only knew what it was, and that's worth more than anything else."

Ellen stared, then she laughed, but Honora, in her pink shawl, did not seem amused at all. There was the faintest murmur of voices from the parlor. Honora had never had any love-affair of her own, but as she listened to that low murmur of Annette and her lover, her face took on the expression which it might have worn had she been in Annette's place. And the pink shawl cast a rosy glow over her silvery hair of age, all like the joy of the giver upon beholding the joy over the gift.

THE WILLOW-WARE

THE WILLOW-WARE

ADELINE WEAVER sat under the green trellis of the south door of the old Weaver mansion, and sewed her seam of fine linen. She did not like to sew, but her aunts, the Misses Jane and Eliza Weaver, with whom she lived, would have turned faint with horror had she suggested the possibility of ready-made garments. All the ladies of the Weaver family had always made their own underwear, and the custom had become, as a species of royal etiquette, not to be lightly ignored. Adeline sewed with a sort of surface patience. The green trellis over her head was all interlaced with delicate green grape-vines. The grapes had just begun to form. Tiny clusters of green globules like jewels dotted the tracery over her head. Adeline's aunts were sewing in the south room. Adeline could hear the soft murmur of their voices, but could seldom distinguish a word. The women of the Weaver family had

naturally low and gentle voices with no harsh notes. There was a tradition that no women of the family ever screamed. If protest they had against pain or fear or injustice they kept it locked in their own breasts. This young Adeline was a true Weaver. She sat there in her cool, lilac muslin gown, cut V-shaped at the long, slender throat, and fastened with an amethyst brooch, with her soft gold hair parted over her serene forehead, and she was the very image of peaceful young womanhood at a peaceful task, when inwardly her whole spirit surged in a fierce revolt. Across the wide street, overarched with elms, she could see a row of neat little white cottages, each standing in its green yard. Adeline looked at them,and took another delicate stitch. She felt horribly irritated by the row of little white cottages in their green yards. She was eighteen years old, and she had never spent a night away from home, and her room faced those cottages, and she had never waked in the morning to another prospect. She had been educated by her aunts and a governess who was a distant relative of the family. The governess was a maiden lady, and she had taught the girl in a stereotyped fashion, as she and the Misses Weaver had been taught.

Now that her education was finished, the one

thing which really asserted itself within her, and which was beyond all education, was her own youth, and her longing for her joy of life. The straight-laced fashion in which she had been trained made this almost abnormal. Adeline was full of dreams, but so far they had been dreams into which she could admit no man of her acquaintance without sacrilege. Still she dreamed with an innocent and almost holy ardor. This young thing fastened, as it were, by thongs of duty to age and conservatism, pulled hard at her leash. If she had ever known liberty, if she had ever had a change of scene, and lovers, they would not have seemed so precious to her. Adeline's dreams were not wholly of lovers, she dreamed also of mates of her own sex. She had never had any. Her aunts were full of a gentle but none the less obstinate pride of birth and education and modest affluence, and they considered that there were no fit mates for their niece in the village.

Presently Adeline saw two young girls coming down the street. They had their arms around each other's waists, and, although they were as old as she, were advancing with a hop and skip like children. Their shrill, sweet voices sounded like bird-songs. Adeline watched them enviously. One was the daughter of

the village cobbler, the other of a man who got a frugal living from tending gardens, and doing odd jobs. Both glanced at her, then looked away and hushed their merry chatter and laughter. They stood in awe of her. Adeline felt hurt because of it. She did not feel in the least above them. Her very heart leaped after the other young things of her kind. She sighed, and took another stitch. The air had been very still. A breeze blew out of the west crossing two windows of the sitting-room. On the wings of this west wind came her Aunt Eliza Weaver's voice: "Of course, to-morrow afternoon as usual," she said. Adeline sighed wearily. She knew so well what that meant: another recurrence of one of the monotonies of her life. The minister, Dr. Timothy Akers, was coming to tea. Regularly once a week, on Thursday, he came to tea. He was an old man, older than either of her aunts, but still hale. He liked the good things of life within clerical limits. Invitations to tea were his especial delights; especially he enjoyed taking tea at the Weaver mansion. He himself came of good old stock. He felt himself in the presence of his equals, and, moreover, he enjoyed a mild sense of gallantry in his relations with the Weaver ladies. He had never married. He had never had a love affair, but feminine atten-

tion was dear to him. He always came carefully brushed, with the faintest suggestion of masculine coquetry in his greeting, and the Weaver sisters never failed to meet him in kind arrayed in their old laces, and rich silks, and with their evanescent female coquetry of manner. Dr. Akers had come thus to tea ever since Adeline could remember. There was a time when village gossip had associated his name with that of Miss Eliza Weaver, the younger of the two sisters. Although she had long been an old maid and he an old bachelor, even when Adeline was a child still there were people who did not think a match between the clergyman and Miss Eliza altogether a ridiculous assumption. In those days Miss Eliza used possibly to dwell a little more upon her faded yet still sweet reflection in her looking-glass, and arrange with a trifle more care the clusters of soft curls on either side of her delicate face. She used to play the piano for him in her stilted lady-style, touching the yellow ivory keys daintily with the tips of her taper fingers. Now Adeline was called upon to do that. Miss Eliza had suffered one winter from rheumatism in her hands, and she was well aware that they were veinous, and wrinkled. She let soft lace fall over them, and did not play the piano any more. Adeline always

played one particular piece for Dr. Akers which she disliked extremely. It was called "Dew-fall." There was a weakly, sentimental air with weary variations. Adeline suspected that Dr. Akers and her Aunt Eliza might have some romantic associations with the piece. Once, whirling around suddenly upon the piano stool, when she had finished, she had caught the coquettish simper upon her Aunt Eliza's face, and the clergyman's gentle, languishing glance at her. Adeline's first sensation had been one of wondering amusement, then she had felt the pathos of it. "Poor Aunt Liza," she said to herself that night, when she was alone in her room brushing out her shining lengths of hair. Then she thought how easily her Aunt Eliza's fate might be her own, and she pitied herself, with a sort of fierce anger at herself for the pity. "Maybe I shall not have even a Dr. Akers, not even the ghost of a love affair, to dwell upon when I am Aunt Eliza's age," she reflected.

This afternoon, when she heard her aunts talking about the clergyman's coming to tea, a sensation of almost unbearable boredom which fairly amounted to pain came over her. She asked herself wearily how she could endure that endless repetition of events which would ensue the next evening. She knew just how the tea-

table would look decked with its fine damask, its old cut glass, and thin silver, and the set of blue and white willow-ware, which her great-grandfather Weaver had brought from over seas. She knew just what they would have for tea. The menu never varied. There would be hot biscuits made with cream, cold ham cut in thick, pink slices, an omelet made with sweet herbs, a mould of quivering red jelly, pound cake, fruit cake, and tea, and dainty little pats of fresh butter. Once Adeline in sheer desperation had endeavored to make a change in the unvarying list of eatables. She had suggested cold tongue instead of ham, and a salad. But her aunts had regarded her with a gentle surprise and delicate chins set with obstinacy. "We have always had cold ham, and Dr. Akers prefers it," her Aunt Eliza had replied. Again Adeline had detected the faint simper of sentimentalism upon her aunt's face. Again she felt at once amused and compassionate. "I suppose they had cold ham when they had a half-way love scene after Aunt Eliza played 'Dewfall,'" Adeline thought. This afternoon, as she reviewed the unvarying programme for the next evening, that lackadaisical piece called "Dewfall" had its own place in her painful sense of monotony. She thought with sudden desperation that she might hide the music, then

she reflected that nobody would believe that she could not play it by rote, as indeed she could. She took another stitch, and glanced over her fine seam at the opposite cottages. Again a soft puff of west wind roughed her yellow hair, and she caught plainly the sense of the conversation in the sitting-room. "I must not forget to remind Hannah to mix up the biscuits to rise to-night," her Aunt Jane was saying. Adeline's lips curled scornfully, "As if Hannah could forget," she fairly whispered.

She wished sometimes that the old servant-woman would forget something. It seemed to the girl often as if *she* were nothing but an incarnate memory of years of routine. Hannah was old, older than Miss Jane Weaver. She was large, and padded heavily about like a cushion-footed animal. Her immense face looked vacant of everything except old memories. Hannah, as it seemed to Adeline, would have fallen prostrate, a shuddering heap of flesh, before an Innovation. Once Adeline had prevailed upon her to try a new recipe for cake. The cake had been a failure, and Hannah had been nearly ill. "My dear," her Aunt Jane had said to Adeline, "Hannah is used to doing things one way. She does them very well. Your Aunt Eliza and I think it best that you

should not disturb her. Hannah is not as young as she has been." Adeline had acquiesced sweetly, but she had eaten the cake failure, soggy as it was, with a sort of fierce animal relish. At least it was something different. Adeline was often conscious of a vandal wish that Hannah's unfailing recipes would fail. She almost felt at times, so weary she was, that it would be good to eat grass like Nebuchadnezzar. It was odd that the girl's health should not have deserted her, such was her weariness of spirit, but she came of a delicately healthy stock. She was fine in the grain, but built to endure even monotony. Then too, she was much in the open, and that served to preserve her health. Adeline often felt that had it not been for the variableness of weather, which was the only variableness in her life, she should ave gone mad. Lately even nature had grown monotonous. There had been day after day of sweet serene weather. Light winds had risen now and then and shifted, then died away into a soft calm. It was neither cool nor hot. The summer advanced surely, but so slowly that one got little sense of change from that. Adeline looked up at the gold-green grapevine over her head. "It looked just as it does now a week ago," she thought. Then again the anticipation of the next evening: the bland

clergyman, the tea, and herself playing "Dewfall" came over her, and fairly stung her into revolt. A bright red flamed out on her soft cheeks. She put up one slim hand, and gave the smooth folds of her hair an impatient push back, revealing a bold, almost boyish fulness of temples. She heard the faint clink of silver from the kitchen, where old Hannah was preparing tea, the invariable tea of that night of the week, cream toast, dried beef, and sponge cake. How she hated that, too! She made a straight line of her sweet lips which curved like a rose. She let her work fall into her lap, and threw herself back in her chair. She looked rebelliously at the work. She hemstitched all her fine linen handkerchiefs by hand. Her aunts would have shuddered at the thought of a machine-bordered handkerchief for a Weaver. She had been listlessly toiling at the square of fine linen for days. She shrugged her sloping shoulders contemptuously. "What is the use?" she thought. "I would just as soon have machine-worked handkerchiefs for the rest of my days. I would much rather than sit and sew as I do." She thought again, a passion of longing, of the skipping young girls who had recently passed. How much better to run along the street with them, and laugh and prate with youth of the joys of youth, even the follies

of youth, than to have all her garments hand-made. The tragedy of a tight leash upon growth forced itself upon her consciousness. The holiest force in the world, that of the growth of youth, was being restrained. Angry tears came into her eyes. "It is cruel," she said to herself—"cruel." Again she heard the clink of silver. She smelled the bread toasting, she smelled the choice green tea which her aunts loved. She looked at the little gold watch which had been her mother's, which was suspended around her neck by a slender gold chain. It was almost tea time. A sudden resolve seized upon her. The spirit of rebellion grew. She made up her mind to do an unheard-of thing: something which she had never done. Punctuality was held as one of the cardinal virtues by her aunts. "None of the Weavers have ever been unpunctual," Miss Jane was wont to say. Miss Eliza often remarked that she herself had always considered it unworthy of a gentlewoman to be unpunctual. Adeline resolved to fly in the face of this edict of the Weavers. She said to herself that she would be *late for tea.* She folded her work, and quilted in the needle. She placed it neatly in her little work-basket. Revolt had not yet fully asserted itself within her. She had been taught that no gentlewoman was dis-

orderly. Order often wearied her, she had so much of it, but it had become involuntary. She rose, and stole noiselessly under the green canopy of the porch into the side door; she tiptoed noiselessly down the path; she skirted the house out of range of the sitting-room windows. Then she gathered up her muslin skirts and ran like a cat. She even kicked her heels a little, flirting out the back breadths of her skirts. If her aunts had only seen those unseemly gambols of the slim, pointed Weaver feet!

She ran in the direction which the two young girls had taken: towards the village post-office, which was in the big country store. Just as she reached it the girls came out. One was nibbling a barley sugar-stick; the other, one of red and white peppermint—both with the frank enjoyment of children. The cobbler's daughter carried a little paper bag and a letter.

Adeline entered the store, made a feint of looking in the post-office, and was out, at the heels of the other girls. Presently she caught up with them. They looked at her and nodded shyly. The cobbler's daughter, who was the less self-conscious of the two, said, "Good-afternoon," in a thin, sweet little voice. Adeline responded. Then she walked along with the girls. She was the shyest of all. When su-

periority is shy, it is with intensity. Now and then she glanced at her companions. Her cheeks were burning. She said something about the weather in a faltering voice, and nobody could have understood the response which the other girls made. Finally the cobbler's daughter recovered herself. She extended the sticky little paper bag, which she carried, towards Adeline. "Have some candy?" she said, affably. The impulse of generosity gave her self-poise. She was an honest, friendly little soul. Adeline took a stick of candy and thanked her, and a specimen of familiarity was established. The girls had met on a common ground of young girlhood: the love of sweets. They looked indescribably young as they went on sucking the sweeties. Adeline lost completely her air of womanly serenity, which she always wore over her youthful turbulence. She looked the youngest, the freest of the three. She laughed, now and then she gave a little sidewise spring like a kitten out of pure animal spirits. Occasionally the other girls glanced at each other with wonder. They could not understand how it had happened that Miss Adeline Weaver had so descended from her height. However, at last, such was her spontaneous sweetness, her gay innocence, that they met her fully. They danced along, all linking

arms. Presently they saw a young man walking towards them, and immediately feminine instinct asserted themselves. They separated. They walked demurely. When they passed the young man there was just the merest glimpse of dewy eyes between the modest droop of lids. He was a stranger to all of them. He was dressed after a different fashion from the youths of the village. He was very handsome, tall and fair-haired, with an aristocratic cast of features, yet withal a mischievous glance of appraisal at the girls. He was entirely out of hearing before the cobbler's daughter spoke.

"He must be Dr. Aker's nephew," said she.

"Yes," assented the other girl. "I heard he was coming. Dr. Aker's housekeeper told mother that he was coming for a visit. He lives in Boston, and his name is Farwell. He is Dr. Aker's sister's son."

"Isn't he handsome?"

"He is beautiful," said the gardener's daughter.

Adeline said nothing, but wonder and rapture were in her face. He was no stranger to *her*. He was the man of her dreams. Color suffused her face. She realized a sense of shame that she should have met him thus. They should have met in some green solitude which had always been the background of her

dreams. Living constantly with her elders had given the girl an old-fashioned habit of thought. She had almost Elizabethan settings for all her romantic imaginings. It fairly shocked her that she should have met him on the village street with two young girls, and all three sucking sticks of candy like children. She drew hers from her mouth, and threw it on the ground. "Ain't it good?" asked the cobbler's daughter. Adeline started confusedly. Her courtesy was instinctive, and she had outraged it.

"Oh, very good indeed!" she cried, "very good!"

"Then why did you throw it away?"

"I never eat much candy. I beg your pardon," said Adeline.

The other girls were perfectly good-natured and merry. They laughed, but Adeline continued to feel abashed. The old sense of aloofness reasserted itself.

She went along soberly with them a little farther, then the cobbler's daughter reached her own home, and said good-night, and turned her steps into the path between two rows of clove pinks, which led through the green front yard to the door. The gardener's daughter lived a little farther on. Adeline looked at her watch innocently and conscious of the awe

which the action inspired in her companion. "I must go, too," said Adeline; "good-night."

The gardener's daughter stood looking after her. The cobbler's daughter danced back between the rows of clove-pinks for a last word. "She didn't act a mite stuck up, and then she did," she said.

"That's so," assented the other girl.

Adeline meantime hastened home. She was already late for tea, but the fact, instead of exhilarating her, as she had expected, alarmed her. When she reached home both her aunts were on the porch swathed, one in a fleecy white shawl, the other in an ancient India-web. They regarded Adeline with anxiety as she came hurrying towards them.

"My dear," said her Aunt Jane.

"My dear," said her Aunt Eliza.

That was all that either said, but there was a world of meaning in the two words.

"I am sorry," stammered Adeline. "It was so pleasant, and I had had no exercise to day, and I—went to the post-office—"

She paused. Both her aunts appeared to be waiting. Untruth or even the silence of deceit was not in the girl.

"I met Flora Shaw and Lizzie Ellis," said Adeline, "and I walked a little way down the street with them."

Then Adeline waited. She knew there was no storm for which to wait, only a calm, but it was a calm which she had dreaded ever since she could remember.

At last her Aunt Jane spoke. "Flora Shaw and Lizzie Ellis."

Then her Aunt Eliza spoke. "Flora Shaw and Lizzie Ellis."

"Yes, Aunts," responded Adeline.

There was another pause before another calm. Then Miss Jane spoke again. "Come in, dear," said she, "tea has been waiting for over half an hour."

Adeline followed her two aunts, majestic in their unruffled patience of exterior, trailing their rich black skirts, holding their heads erect above their soft laces, into the house.

She took her place at the table. She was outwardly as serene as her aunts. Inwardly the waves of youthful excitement and unrest again surged. She felt a hysterical delight that she was late, that she had successfully invaded the monotony of things, and yet she was conscious of remorse and grief that she had disturbed her aunts. She loved her aunts. Affection existed in the girl's soul as an essential perfume. Without it her own self was inconceivable. And yet she had that delight in rebellion against that which she loved. She

did not want any supper, yet she cleared her plate daintily of all which was placed thereon. It was one of the laws of the house that nothing should be left on a plate. Adeline had been taught that it was not lady-like. All the time Adeline was eating, taking small mouthfuls, scarcely moving her mouth, as she had been taught, she was thinking of the young man whom she had met: Dr. Aker's nephew. She wondered if he might not be coming to tea with his uncle the next afternoon. She felt herself turn hot and cold at the supposition. She kept waiting for one of her aunts to say something with regard to it. When she woke the next morning that was her first thought. Every time she looked at her Aunt Eliza or her Aunt Jane or even Hannah, there was an inquiring expression on her face. However, not a word was said with regard to Dr. Aker's nephew during the day, although the preparations for the company tea went on as they had always gone on, with the same wearying monotony. It was always Adeline's task on these occasions to polish the old silver, of which the Weavers had a large stock. Of late years she had also set the tea-table. She took especial pains with it that day. She could not help having a faint hope that Dr. Aker's nephew might come, although not a word had been

"SHE WAS THINKING OF THE YOUNG MAN SHE HAD MET"

said. In the middle of the afternoon she had the table decked with the fine old damask and silver, and a great china vase of roses adorned the centre, when she overhead a conversation between her aunts in the sitting-room:

"I met Mrs. Samuel Whitridge this morning on the street," said Miss Eliza Weaver, "and she told me that Dr. Aker's nephew from Boston, Elias Farwell, had been spending two days with him."

"Then we ought to send Hannah at once and invite him to come to tea with Dr. Akers," responded Jane, and Adeline's heart leaped.

It sank again at Eliza Weaver's reply: "Mrs. Whitridge said he was going away on the noon train," said she.

"It would have been strange if Dr. Akers had not told us if his nephew were to be here," said Jane, "and given us a chance to invite him. He must be Dr. Akers's sister Lily's son."

"Yes, she married a Farwell," assented Eliza.

Adeline heard no more. She stood still with a drumming in her ears. Then it was all over: the little chance of a break in the terrible, tragic monotony of things. He was not coming. It was all to be the way it had always been. The girl's soft cheeks flushed, a strange glitter came into her sweet blue eyes, an inconsequent rage

against existing conditions of things seized her. She had not yet put the precious old willow-ware on the table. She glanced around her. Her aunts, already dressed, were in the sitting-room. Old Hannah had gone to the store on an errand. Adeline softly closed the dining-room door. Then she did an awful thing. She carried the willow-ware — the whole set, loading her slender arms with as many pieces at a time as she could carry—out into the garden to the summer-house. In the floor of the summer-house were two loose boards. She hid the willow-ware under the floor, replacing the boards, then she flew back to the house.

When she entered the dining-room; her Aunt Eliza was calling to her from the sitting-room:

"Is the table set, dear?" asked Aunt Eliza.

Adeline opened the door a little way, and stood, her pallid, shocked young face peering through. "All except the dishes," replied Adeline, faintly. "I think I must go up to my room and lie down a little while, Aunt Eliza."

"Why, what is the matter, aren't you well?" inquired her aunt's soft, anxious voice.

"My head aches a little."

Then Miss Jane Weaver spoke. "Go up to your room at once, then," said she, "and bathe your head with cologne, and lie down until it is time to dress for tea."

"Yes, Aunt Jane," replied Adeline. She heard dimly her Aunt Eliza saying something about the dear child having been too long out in the sun that morning as she fled up the spiral stairs. When she reached her own room, and had closed the door, she stood still in the midst of it. She had never known before the awful delight of wickedness. Now she realized that she knew it. Hiding away that willow-ware, breaking in upon the sacred conservatism of the daily Weaver life, was to her consciousness a deed of the nature of sacrilege, let alone the deceit and the secresy involved. She was frightened as she had never been frightened, she was wretched as she had never been wretched, and yet she was conscious of a mad exhilaration which was entrancing. She took off her gown, put on a loose white wrapper, and lay down on a couch under her window. Her room was over the dining-room. She thought she might overhear something of the consternation which would arise when Hannah returned and the loss of the willow-ware was discovered. She thought, with a terrified pang, what she could do if they should come and question her, but she had not much fear of that. What she had done would be so inconceivable to her aunts that questioning would simply not occur to them.

Presently, as she lay there, she heard Hannah's heavy shuffle on the gravel-walk. Then she waited a long time. Then she heard a shrill chorus: her aunts' voices for once raised above their gentle pitch, and Hannah's, loudly vociferous, almost hysterical. They had discovered the loss of the willow-ware. Adeline felt as if she might faint. A chill crept over her in the warm afternoon. Would they come at once to her and inquire when she had last seen the willow-ware—if she knew aught concerning its disappearance? Guilty of deceit although she was, a downright falsehood was inconceivable to Adeline. She knew that if they asked, she must answer truly. She lay tense with fear, but gradually the tumult died away and nobody came. Then she heard the far-away clink of china. "Hannah is setting the table with the china with lavender sprigs," she thought. The china with lavender-sprig pattern was regarded as the second best in the Weaver house. Adeline felt relieved. She reflected how the willow-ware had been kept by itself in one of the china closets, the closet without a glass door. In the Weaver dining-room were three china closets. The family was rich in china. Two of the closets had wood doors, one had glass in leaded pane. In that was kept odd pieces and the cut glass, for which there

was no room on the old Chippendale sideboard. Adeline reasoned that no one would have noticed that the willow-ware had disappeared unless she had purposely gone to the closet for it. It was a small closet, and had contained nothing else. When she had robbed it she had left the shelves entirely bare.

It had been two o'clock when Adeline lay down. She could not sleep, but she remained on the couch in that odd state of terror and guilty exhilaration until she heard the tall clock in the hall below strike four. Dr. Akers always arrived punctually at half-past four. She realized that she must rise and dress. She arranged her hair carefully before her little muslin-draped mirror. She washed her flushed face. She looked guilty to herself. She wondered if anybody would notice. She lingered over her toilet. She got out an old sprigged muslin gown. "It does not make any difference what I wear," she said, rebelliously to herself. She thought how different it would have been had Dr. Akers' nephew been coming. At half-past four she was dressed. She had put on a little coral necklace to brighten the old muslin. She was about to go down when she heard voices. She peeped around her dimity curtains, and—Dr. Akers was approaching the house, and his nephew was with him.

Adeline started violently. The first sensation which she had was one of shame and remorse. She felt like a naughty child who had fought, to her own undoing, against wind. Here she had done what she realized to be almost something which savored of unreason, because of disappointment and unhappiness, and here there was no disappointment, no unhappiness save what she had brought upon herself.

Adeline hesitated a second; then she hurriedly divested herself of the old muslin gown, and got a pretty new one from her closet. The gown was cross-barred muslin with a pattern of green leaves. Adeline tied a green ribbon around her waist. Then she paused irresolute before her dressing-table. She owned a valuable ornament which she longed to wear, but she was not quite sure what her aunts would think. She had never worn it much. Her aunts had always told her that it was not suitable for ordinary occasions, and poor Adeline had experienced very few occasions which did not come under that head. Finally she could not resist the temptation. She took out of a drawer a case, opened it, and forthwith a green light flashed in her eyes from an emerald necklace which had come down to her from her great-grandmother, Adeline Weaver. She fas-

tened the ornament around her neck, and, in spite of her secret guilt, smiled radiantly and innocently at her reflected image in the glass. The emeralds around her white throat gave the finishing touch to the picture. She was complete, wonderful to see. She turned her head this way and that; she smoothed the glossy golden ripples of hair which concealed her ears except the rosy tips. She perked anew the bow of her green belt-ribbon. Then she went down-stairs. When she entered the stately best parlor in which her aunts were seated with their guests, she had forgotten the willow-ware and the dreadful thing she had done. She thought only of the radiant picture adorned with emeralds which she had seen in her glass. She thought only of meeting—not meeting, had they not met already hundreds of times, in the sacred intimacy of her maiden dreams? Meeting was not the word to use with regard to her coming sight of Dr. Akers's nephew. Incarnation better expressed her exalted passion with regard to it all. The gentlemen arose directly, when Adeline crossed the parlor threshold. Dr. Akers saluted her with ceremonious politeness, and begged leave to present his nephew, Mr. Elias Farwell. Adeline courtesied. She felt the young man's hand enclosing hers. Her heart beat hard, there was a singing in her ears,

but she was a gentlewoman born and bred. She greeted Mr. Farwell with the gentle composure which she had been taught. Then she seated herself beside a window. The window was open, and a green vine outside partly veiled it. The sun shone through the vine-leaves over the girl with her gold hair. Her soft face glowed with triumphant tints of rose and pearl in spite of the green light. The emeralds at her throat gleamed. She crossed her slim hands in her lap, and an emerald on one of them also gleamed. Elias Farwell gazed at her with a startled air. He thought that he had never before seen such a beautiful girl, and he had seen many girls. He had passed dreams into realities, although he was worthy of the stock from which he came.

Dr. Timothy Akers had reason for the pride with which he had presented his nephew to the Weaver ladies. It was not long before tea was announced. Young Farwell sat beside Adeline. They talked a little about the village, about Boston, how he was enjoying his visit, the weather. The surface of the conversation was prosaic enough, but there were depths below the surface. When Elias remarked upon the beauty of the weather he looked at the girl's beautiful face, he looked at the slim white hand with its gleaming emerald, and his tone

took on almost a singing cadence, the cadence of a love song. Adeline's cheeks deepened in color; she scarcely raised her eyes. She heard the sweet tone of the depths: how when Elias said the weather was beautiful, he in reality was saying, "*How beautiful art thou, oh my beloved, and how my heart leaps with joy at the discovery of thee.*"

Yet Elias Farwell was not all sentiment and romance. He had a ready wit, and often Adeline had sore work to keep her young laughter within bounds, and not shock her aunts and Dr. Akers. She had never been so happy in her life, and yet beneath the happiness was ever present the dreadful memory of the willow-ware. Now that the maddening spell of monotony which had influenced her was broken the act seemed one of the most incredible follies as well as of wickedness.

She had little fear that her aunts would mention it while at the tea-table; she knew that they might account it a breach of good manners to mention a loss under such circumstances. However, when they were in the parlor again, she listened to Elias, with her ears ready for the willow-ware. Presently it came. First Miss Eliza mentioned the mysterious disappearance of the household treasures, then Miss Jane. Dr. Akers listened. Then he responded at once

with what seemed a solution of the problem. A man had been at his own home a few days before, and had tried by the most strenuous means to induce him to sell a valuable old clock and a table. He was a collector of antiques. Dr. Akers, with a charitable bias towards doubt, voiced his suspicion of this man. He had been aggressive, fairly impertinent, perhaps he—

Miss Eliza immediately concurred with his half-expressed view. She had little doubt that some one had told the man of their willow-ware, that the man had also been told that there was no hope of his being able to purchase. "We often have the side door unlocked," said Miss Eliza; "then if sister and I were in our rooms, and Adeline out—Hannah does not hear readily —it would be quite possible."

Miss Jane also became convinced. "In future we must keep that door locked," she said. She did not even then express much grief for the loss of the china. She felt grief, but she held it to be ill-bred to manifest it. Miss Eliza, too, was restrained. Adeline said nothing. Elias was watching her. He looked puzzled and concerned. The girl's face was as pale as chalk, her eyes were dilated as with fear. She expected every moment a point-blank question, as to when she had last seen the china.

She felt that she could not bear it before him. Elias leaned over and almost whispered in her ear:

"Haven't you a garden behind the house?" he asked.

Adeline nodded. She could not speak.

Just then Dr. Aker asked her to play. She could not feel her feet as she walked towards the ancient piano. Dr. Akers asked for "Dewfall," and Elias found the music and turned the pages. Adeline always wondered how she ever got through it. When she had finished, Elias spoke rather peremptorily:

"It is charming," he said—"charming; but Miss Weaver cannot play again now. She has promised to show me the garden before dark."

Miss Eliza looked politely dismayed. In spite of her sentimental yearnings over the piece of music called "Dewfall," she had passed the age when she cared to be exposed to the reality of the title. She thought of her rheumatism, she felt a premonitory twinge, but she rose at once. Of course Adeline could not be allowed to walk in the garden with a young man, so late, without a chaperon. "Please get my white shawl, my dear," she said, patiently to Adeline.

But Dr. Akers regarded her with more of romantic reminiscence than usual. He begged

that she would remain. He had some matters pertaining to the church to discuss with her. Dr. Akers had a covert sympathy with his nephew. Then it was Miss Jane's turn. She rose and fluttered perceptibly like a bird for a second. Then she sat down again. It was manifest that she could not be in two places at once. She also did not like to be from under the shelter of a roof after dewfall, and she considered that her sister as well as Adeline required a chaperon.

It thus happened that young Elias Farwell and young Adeline Weaver went forth alone into the garden together. Adeline gathered up her filmy muslin skirts, and flitted beside the young man along the box-bordered paths. The dark was coming rapidly, and a heavy silver steam was at once rising and falling. Clouds from the moist, warm earth met shafts of cloud reaching down from the sky. Through these shafts presently the moon shone dimly, turning them from silver to a mystery of gold. All around them was the subtle odor of the box, and also of roses and heliotrope. The pair walked on in this silver and gold mist inhaling the bouquet of youth and summer. Adeline had taken Elias's arm. Their talk at first was commonplace enough. Elias inquired if she were not afraid of the dampness, and

Adeline replied that she was not, and there had been a world of tender solicitude and responsive trust in the trite remarks. Then Adeline said something about the odor of the box being so evident, and that some people considered it unhealthy, but she loved it, and Elias replied, fervently, that he loved it too. He felt in truth as if he loved everything which had the slightest relation to this lovely creature on his arm. They walked through the garden-paths several times; the mist deepened. Adeline's face was as dewy as a flower. Elias laid his hand on her muslin sleeve. "Why, your sleeve is wet, fairly wet," said he.

"Perhaps we had better return to the house," Adeline said. She spoke like a reluctant child. A little laugh sounded at her side, a little laugh of tender triumph and amusement.

"Nonsense, you do not want to go in and sit with my uncle and your aunts," he said.

Adeline shrank away from him a little. "But it is really very wet," she said, "such a heavy dew." In reality she dreaded what her aunts might think if she came in with her new muslin limp and draggled.

Elias had an inspiration. "You do not want to go into the house," he said. "Why not sit for a while in that summer-house we just passed. There will be a roof over our heads and floor

under our feet. Why?" He paused in amazement at the violent start which the girl beside him gave. Suddenly she remembered the willow-ware.

"What is the matter?" he inquired, anxiously.

"Nothing," replied Adeline, faintly.

"Come, then," said Elias. Soon the two sat side by side in the summer-house, gazing out into the pale luminousness which surrounded them, and out of which the scent of the box called like a voice with some mystic message. "What is the name of the piece you played?" asked Elias.

"Dewfall."

Elias laughed out. "Who taught you to play?" he asked.

"Aunt Eliza."

Elias laughed again. "That is the reason why you touch the keys as if you had little shell thimbles on your fingers," he said.

Adeline laughed, too. She was not at all offended. "That is the way Aunt Eliza taught me," she said—"the way she used to play it. I don't like the piece very well."

"Nor I. But when you play your fingers ought to kiss the keys, not peck at them. Your aunt's fingers are very tapering."

"Very."

Then Elias spoke like a boy, and indeed he was little more. "I am twenty-three," said he. "How old are you?"

"Eighteen."

"I think my Uncle Timothy used to be rather in love with one of your aunts," said Elias.

"I think so," Adeline admitted, tremulously.

"Your Aunt Eliza?"

"Yes."

"If they had been married we should have been as good as cousins," said Elias. "Your Aunt Eliza must have been a pretty girl."

"I think she must have been."

"I wonder if they ever think of it now. It must seem very far away," Elias said.

"Yes."

The two looked at each other, their faces were white blurs. They were almost a part of the shadows around them, but they felt their youth in every vein. They were something apart from the elderly people in the house, they triumphed over the faint languishing of the night.

They sat so close that their shoulders touched. Each tried to conceal the fact from self-consciousness and from the other. Each felt for self, the most sacred modesty; for the other, the most sacred respect; and yet their young shoul-

ders touched, and such thrills of sweetness passed through their souls and their bodies that it seemed as if light and perfume and music must come of it.

"I was going away this afternoon," Elias said, in a whisper. Adeline shuddered a little at the thought; they sat closer to each other. "I saw you last night on the street with those two girls," Elias went on, "and—I—decided I would not go. Uncle Timothy said he would bring me here to tea to-night, and so I—"

His voice trailed into nothingness. Suddenly the young man's arm was around the girl's waist, his cheek against her soft cool one, his panting whisper in her ear: "I—I have only known you a few hours, a few minutes," he said, "but—but I never saw any one like you. Can you tell so soon? Can you tell if you can ever care? You have only known me a few minutes—can you—"

"I have known you forever," Adeline whispered back.

Then they kissed each other. Adeline's head sank on the young man's shoulder. She was in a sort of ecstasy.

"Then you—can tell," stammered Elias. "You can tell now that some day you can care enough for me to marry me. I—"

Elias stopped in dismay. Adeline had torn

herself from his arms. She was on her feet. She had remembered the dreadful thing she had done. She remembered the blue china under the very floor on which they stood. How could she tell him? And yet she could not marry him unless she did tell.

"It is very damp and very late," Adeline said, in a quivering but peremptory voice. "I must return to the house."

With that she was already in the path, flitting ahead, and naught for Elias to do but to follow her, pressing her softly with anxious questions, to which she paid no heed. Adeline fairly ran, and soon they were in the parlor with their elders, and Adeline was pale, and her aunts were feeling her damp muslin with dismay. Soon Dr. Akers and his nephew took their leave, and Adeline was made to drink a glass of port to ward off a cold before she went to bed.

The next day Elias Farwell appeared again, and the next, and the next. He was a most ardent wooer, but he seemed to make no progress. Adeline gave him no more solitary interviews. She looked at him at times as if she loved him, but also as if she were afraid. Young Elias Farwell did not underrate his attractions. He was no faint heart. He remained in the village as his uncle's guest, and he laid siege to

Adeline day after day. But it was a full month before he discovered the obstacle to his wooing. One Thursday evening he was taking tea at the Weaver mansion with his uncle, and the subject of the willow-ware was broached again. He happened to be looking at Adeline, and something in her face betrayed her. He did not know what the secret was, but he knew that she had a secret concerning the missing china which made her heart sore.

That evening for the first time Adeline weakened, and the two went out in the garden again. Now the roses were gone, but the scent of the box endured under a clear sky, through which the great lustre of the moon floated. They sat down in the summer-house again, and Elias laid his hand resolutely on the girl's.

"Now you must tell me," said he. "I know a good deal already. You have shunned me because of the willow-ware. Why? What has a set of blue and white china's disappearance to do with you and me?"

"It is under this floor," Adeline said, in a strained voice.

Elias stared at her. "Under this floor?"

"Yes, there were two loose boards."

"You put it there?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Because—I had seen you, and I thought you had gone, and—because—"

"Because what?"

"Because every day was like every other, and I was tired of it." Adeline began to weep.

Elias broke into a peal of laughter, and caught her in his arms. "Lord! I should have smashed the willow-ware, every dish of it, long before now if I had had to live the way you do with your dear old aunts, with every day the same, except when Uncle came to tea, and you had to play 'Dewfall'!" said he.

"You understand?" faltered Adeline.

"I think you can never do anything which I shall not be able to understand," said Elias Farwell.

The next Thursday evening the uncle and nephew came again to the Weaver mansion to tea. Adeline wore a pearl ring on her engagement finger. Her aunts and Dr. Akers approved of the match, and Elias's mother had written her a beautiful letter. And the table was set with the willow-ware. The Misses Weaver looked years younger. They seemed to have gotten renewed vitality. They talked quite loudly, quite rapidly.

"Only think," said Miss Eliza, "Hannah opened the door, and there was the willow-ware."

"Yes," said Miss Jane, "every piece."

"Probably the man grew conscience stricken and brought it back; the side door was left unlocked the night before," said Miss Eliza.

"It is beautiful how much honesty and goodness there is in this world, after all," said Miss Jane. Her eyes sparkled with radiant excitement. Nobody knew what the disappearance and mysterious recovery of the willow-ware meant to the Misses Weaver.

They had probably not realized it in the least, but the monotony of their lives had told upon them as well as upon their niece. They had become wearily stagnated. Now all was changed. In spite of their natural grief, when Adeline had married Elias Farwell and gone away to live, they seemed to acquire an afterbloom in their old age. It was all due to the willow-ware. "It would be fairly cruel to tell them," Elias often said to Adeline, when her conscience smote her, and he was right. Not a day but had its savor of mystery and excitement—because—who could tell if the willow-ware would be on its accustomed shelves when the china-closet door was opened or not? It was a shock of happiness which acted like some subtle stimulant for their spirits when they found the china intact. The ever present wonder if they might not, was another. Even Dr.

Akers wrote new sermons under this strange influence. He went home in those days from the Weaver mansion feeling an odd mental strengthening after a discussion about the willow-ware. Right or wrong, they had all gotten a jolt towards happiness out of their ruts of life, which had been wearing their very souls bare of youth and hope.

THE SECRET

THE SECRET

CATHERINE GOULD came hurrying into the house at half-past eight. John Greason, the man to whom she was engaged, sat in the south room with her mother and her aunt Sarah. There were a light and a fire in the best parlor, but, since Catherine was not at home when he arrived, John sat down with her mother and aunt. They had all waited for Catherine with a curious impatience. It was not very late when John arrived, only quarter of eight, but Catherine was always there to welcome him, and this night she was not, and for some reason it struck them all as being singular.

"I don't see where Catherine is," her mother kept saying, uneasily, as they waited.

"Maybe she ran down to the post-office or the store," suggested Aunt Sarah. Aunt Sarah was knitting some white, fleecy wool into a shawl. She also was perturbed, but nothing

ever stopped her knitting. She always kept her hands employed at some little, soft, feminine task like that, and it had become as involuntary with her as breathing. So she knitted on, although she listened for Catherine's step, and frequently glanced at the clock.

When she made her remark about the post-office and the store, John Greason frowned. He was a handsome young man with a square jaw. He had brought a box of candy for Catherine, and it was on his knees as he sat waiting.

"The last mail comes in at five o'clock," said he. "I went into the store on my way here, and Catherine wasn't there. And I should have met her if she had been on her way home."

"That is so," said Catherine's mother. "I don't see where she is. She never goes out without telling where she is going, and she expected you, too."

"Oh, I dare say she has just run out somewhere," said John. He tried to speak easily, but failed. In spite of himself, he frowned. He was angry, albeit unwarrantably so. He was an only son and things had always gone his way. His mother and two sisters had always made things go his way. If John had not what he wanted when he wanted it, they would have felt as if something was wrong with the

universe. Now it seemed inconceivable to him that Catherine should have gone out when she expected *him*, and when he always came at exactly quarter of eight. He tried to converse easily about the weather and the village news. He became every moment prouder and angrier and more resolved that nobody should know. If Catherine Gould chose to go out when she knew *he* was coming, and not tell where she was going, and keep him waiting, nobody should know that he felt it in the least.

Catherine's mother kept looking out of a window. He sat rigidly with his back to one. The curtains were not drawn; outside there was snow on the ground and there was a full moon, so looking out of the windows was like looking into a bright, white world. John would not look. When Catherine's mother looked he grew more and more incensed. He began to consider the advisability of his going home; then at last, just after the clock had struck one for half-past eight, Catherine's mother cried out with joyful relief:

"Here she is!"

"Well, I do wonder where she has been," said Sarah, also with joyful relief.

John said nothing. His face looked very heavy and sullen. He was also quite pale.

Catherine came in all rosy and glowing with

the cold wind. She came in as if there had been nothing unusual whatever about her disappearance. "Oh, it is cold," said she. "Good-evening, John. Have you been here long?"

"He has been here ever since quarter of eight," said her mother. "Where have you been, Catherine?"

John said nothing. He glanced with cold inquiry at Catherine from under his heavy lids. Catherine was laughing. She was about to answer, when she caught that look. Then she laughed again and said nothing. She was a very pretty, fairly a beautiful, girl. She was dressed all in red—red hat, red coat, and red gown; there were glints of red in her brown hair. She removed her hat and coat, and, going to a glass which hung between the two front windows, thrust her slender fingers into the puff of brown hair over her forehead and fluffed it out, still laughing. Then she turned and looked at them. Her whole face was dimpling with mischief. She was so beautiful that her mother felt a thrill of worshipful pride in her, and her aunt Sarah also. As for John Greason, he looked at her, and his mouth straightened.

"Why don't you tell where you have been, Catherine?" asked her mother. She tried to make her voice chiding, but it was full of tenderness.

Catherine only laughed.

"Why, Catherine Gould, where have you been?" asked her aunt.

Catherine answered for the first time, but not satisfactorily.

"That is a secret," said she, and tossed her head and laughed again. She moved towards the door and looked gayly at John, evidently expecting him to rise and follow her into the parlor, but he sat still. "There's a light in the parlor, John," said she.

Then he questioned her for the first time. "Where have you been?" he asked.

Catherine looked at him. She hesitated. Then she again gave her head that gay, defiant toss. "That is a secret," said she.

"Why don't you tell him?" asked her mother, anxiously.

Martha Gould was a tall, ascetic - looking woman, with great eyes sunken in deep hollows. She had a curious way of puckering her mouth, and at the same time wrinkling her forehead between the two leaflike curves of her gray hair. Her sister-in-law, Sarah Gould, who had been in her day a very pretty girl, much like Catherine, but had never married, knitted and eyed her niece. She had been engaged to be married in her late youth, but her lover had died. Since then she had occupied herself with the small interests of life.

"Aren't you coming into the parlor, John?" Catherine asked again. A deeper red blazed out on her cheeks.

"Where have you been?" asked John, steadily gazing at her.

"That is a secret," replied Catherine, but this time she did not laugh.

"Why don't you tell John where you have been, Catherine?" her mother asked, looking uneasily from one to the other. At that moment the two faces—those of the man and girl—looked singularly alike, although none could be more different in feature and coloring. But they wore the same expression. A terrible similarity of unyielding spirit shone forth from both which marked them as mates. If they had been brother and sister instead of lover and sweetheart, the likeness could not have been more evident. John rose slowly to his feet. The little candy-box in his clinched hand was an absurdity compared with his whole bearing. He looked at Catherine, and she looked back at him. The mother and aunt looked at both of them. The mother opened her mouth as if to speak again, then closed it. The ball of white wool rolled from the aunt's lap onto the floor. Catherine picked it up and returned it.

"Thank you," said the aunt, and there was

something awful about that commonplace act and speech in the midst of the tensity of mood which seemed to fill the little room like an imminent explosive. Immediately John Greason gave the box of candy a violent fling. It just missed Catherine, although he certainly did not aim it especially in her direction. The box struck the floor, burst asunder, and all the sweet contents rolled out. Then John Greason strode from the room and the house without another word. He closed the front door with aggressive caution. One could scarcely hear it.

The women remained for a few seconds as if petrified—Catherine standing, with her mother and aunt looking at her. They were all pale, but different emotions were evident on their faces. On Catherine's mother's were bewilderment, terror, and anger; on the aunt's, bewilderment and terror; on Catherine's, the excess of angry obstinacy.

The mother spoke first. "Well, of all things!" said she.

The aunt followed. "Throwing candy round!" she said, and her tone was nearly idiotic. The situation was in reality too much for her wits. Mysteries had always overwhelmed her, and here were mysteries upon mysteries—a very mountain of them. In the first place, where had Catherine been? In the second place,

why would she not tell? In the third place, why such a fuss about it, anyway? Then, why were Catherine and John so angry? Why had John flung the candy? Her pretty, faded eyes settled upon the candy. "As much as two pounds," she remarked, "all over the floor, chocolates and bonbons."

Then Catherine spoke, and her voice was terrible. "I'll pick it up before it gets trodden into the carpet," said she, and forthwith was down upon her knees, gathering up the scattered sweets.

"What are you going to do?" asked her mother, with a sort of gasp.

"Pick up this candy," replied Catherine, in her terrible voice.

"No, I didn't mean about the candy—about John? Are you—going with him again?"

"A girl doesn't go with a little boy, and marry him after she finds it out," replied Catherine, picking up a pink bonbon.

The mother and aunt looked at each other. They even nodded in pantomime for the other to continue the questioning.

"Why wouldn't you tell him where you'd been?" the aunt asked finally, in her sweet, scared little pipe.

"Because he asked," replied Catherine.

"Because he—asked?" repeated Mrs. Gould.

Catherine turned a set face upon her. "Mother," said she, "let us have no more talk about this. I have nothing more to say. There is nothing more I *will* say. John suspected me of going somewhere or doing something I should not. He questioned me like a slave - owner. If he does so before I am married, what will he do after? My life would be a hell. If I see that a door leads into hell, I don't propose to enter it if I can keep out. That's all I have to say."

"Oh my, Catherine!" the aunt cried. in horror.

But Catherine's mother supported her, after a fashion. "I know what you mean," said she. "I never saw a grown-up man do such a silly, childish thing as to throw that candy on the floor that way. There's another piece under that rocking-chair. He has got an awful temper, and one you can't reckon with in a grown man. If he was a child, you could spank him, but as long as he's a man—"

"I don't call him a man," interposed Catherine.

The aunt continued, "As long as he's a man," said she, "all a woman can do is to sit still and do nothing."

"I am not going to sit still and do nothing," Catherine said. She straightened herself and puckered up her red dress skirt into a bag for

the candy and broken box, then went towards the door.

"Where are you going now, Catherine?" her mother inquired, anxiously.

"I am going to dispose of this candy."

Catherine opened the door into the icy entry and closed it quickly behind her, lest the cold air strike her mother and aunt. She was very considerate. The two elder women looked at each other.

"What do you suppose she's going to do with it?" the aunt asked, feebly.

"I suppose she's going to give it a fling after the one that brought it," replied Catherine's mother, sternly. She was growing more and more incensed. It always required some time to work Martha Gould into her farthest height of resentment, but, once there, her mental footing was secure.

"Land!" said Sarah Gould. The word with her meant a great deal. She could hardly have gotten through the world without it.

The women heard the front outside door open. Catherine's mother sprang to the window. She saw a white object with a shower of smaller ones describe an arc and land in the glittering snow of the front yard.

"Has she?" hissed Sarah, in a whisper of tragedy.

Martha turned towards her and nodded with a jerk as Catherine came into the room again, closing the door noiselessly and solicitously behind her. The girl held her head up proudly; not a whit of her beautiful color was dimmed. She was even laughing with apparently no effort whatever and with no bitterness. "The sparrows will have a good breakfast to-morrow," said she.

Her mother gave a grim nod. Her aunt made a little whimpering sound.

"I don't see how you can—" she began, feebly, but her sister, Catherine's mother, interrupted her fiercely.

"What do you want?" she demanded. "Do you want her to sit down and cry because that good-for-nothing fellow has treated her mean?"

"No-o," protested Sarah, who was herself half weeping—"no-o, you know I don't, Martha."

"Then why are you talking so? And I declare, you are half crazy! Anybody would think it was your beau."

Sarah began to weep in good earnest then, putting her handkerchief to her working face. "It is only because I do hate to see folks quarrel," she sobbed. "Folks feel bad when they quarrel, especially after they have thought a good deal of each other, no matter if—they do—try to laugh it off."

"There is no quarrel that I know of," said Catherine, coolly. She laid some hat-pins side by side on the table and straightened a bow on her hat. "Miss Holmes ought to have put some wire in this bow," she said. "Every time I go out in the wind it flops."

"Yes, she ought," returned her mother.

Sarah gasped. Two people talking about wire in a hat-bow in such a crisis struck her like blasphemy.

"I thought you had quarrelled with him," she ventured, in a faint voice, followed by a little sob like a bewildered child's.

"Not at all," said Catherine, still engaged in perking her hat-bow. "John Greason has simply gone home in a huff like a six-year-old boy because he was thwarted in his curiosity and suspicion. A quarrel requires two parties, and there is only one. I have not quarrelled in the least."

"But—" faltered the aunt, "I don't see why you couldn't have told where you had been."

"So I could if I had been asked," replied Catherine.

"You were asked."

"No, I was suspected. I don't answer suspicions. I am above suspicion. I have been all my life, and I always shall be." Catherine gave her beautiful head a toss. She seemed

taller. The steady gleam of her brown eyes and the noble curves of her broad temples seemed indeed to render suspicion something far from her just due. Still, her mother began to look anxious. When Catherine sat down before the stove, turning up the skirt of her red dress and displaying a beruffled silk petticoat, and remarked casually that it was a bitter night outside and it did seem good to be in where it was warm, her mother continued to regard her with a doubtful and anxious frown. After the aunt had gathered up her work, lit her bedroom lamp, and retired, she spoke her mind freely.

"I hope you have done right, Catherine," she said.

Catherine gave her a quick glance over her shoulder. "You don't think I've been down to the hotel drinking or any wild and desperate thing, I hope, mother," she said.

"No, it isn't that, Catherine. I know wherever you were it was no harm, and in a way I don't blame you for not telling when you were questioned the way you were. It was enough to make anybody mad. It made *me* mad, but I wonder if you have done right, after all, in not telling him."

"I have done the only way a girl with any pride could have done."

"Maybe you have, but—well, you know, Catherine, John Greason is a good, steady fellow."

"So is a mule sometimes," interposed Catherine.

"Well, of course, you are only twenty-three, and there are more chances than one—"

"I had chances before John Greason, and I didn't have to hunt for any of them," returned Catherine.

"That is so."

"But I don't care about chances. What earthly difference does it make? We have enough to live on. I have all I want. What do I care if I never get married? Most of the married women I know would say they wished they were out of it, if they told the truth. It's a lot of care and responsibility. A girl can have a much better time."

"Yes, but a woman can't keep herself a girl always," said Catherine's mother, and an odd expression came over her face—an expression of reminiscent tenderness and softness, and also a shade of embarrassment.

Catherine turned and looked at her mother keenly with her clear, proud young eyes. "Mother," said she—she hesitated a moment, then she continued—"did you never regret that you got married?"

The mother blushed. She regarded her daughter with a curious, dignified, yet shamed expression. "Marriage is a divine institution," said she, and closed her lips tightly.

"Oh, nonsense!" cried Catherine. "Tell the truth, mother, and let the divine institution go. I know father was a fretful invalid two-thirds of the time. I have heard all about that from Aunt Sarah. I know until grandmother died you had a hard struggle to get along and make both ends meet, because she didn't like your marrying father, and wouldn't help you, and father never was much of a success as a doctor; he had such a temper and was so miserable himself. And I know you had five children as fast as you could, and they all died except me. Now tell me the truth—if you had it all to live over again, would you marry father?"

The flush faded from Mrs. Gould's face. She was quite pale. "Yes, I would, and thank the Lord for His unspeakable mercy," she said, in a low, oratorical voice, almost as if she were in a pulpit. Then the red flashed over her face again, but the embarrassment was gone. Now she looked at her daughter triumphantly, even with superiority. "I was married when I was eighteen years old, five years younger than you are," said she.

"I could have been if I had chosen," replied Catherine, with a look of wonder.

"I know you could. It is your own fault if you have missed the best this life has for any woman. It is your fault now, and it will be your fault. Where were you to-night?"

Catherine rose, frowning angrily. Then suddenly her face relaxed, and she laughed a merry peal. "You would go straight over and tell John Greason, cold as it is, and scared as you are to go out alone at night," said she. "No, mother, I don't tell where I was, and as for missing the best of life, I'll risk it. I'm going to bed. I'm going to help Alice Leeds get her house ready for her afternoon tea to-morrow, and I promised to be over early."

"You might be getting your own house ready for an afternoon tea."

Catherine laughed again. "As if this house wasn't my home, and as pretty and enough sight prettier than Alice Leeds's, and as if I couldn't have an afternoon tea if I wanted it. I think I will, next month."

"It isn't the same."

"I am satisfied. Alice Leeds's husband doesn't want her to have it, and is as cranky as fury for fear his dinner will be late on account of it. I am going to try to get the people off in season, and help Alice hustle away the com-

pany fixings, and get her precious husband's dinner on the table so he won't scold. Her Eliza is coming down with the grip, and she can't depend too much on her. I told her Jane would come over, but one maid is hardly enough if Eliza should be laid up."

"Are men coming?" asked Mrs. Gould.

Catherine laughed again as she lit her candle, and the soft light flared over her beautiful face. "Men are asked," she replied, "but it is like man supposes and God disposes. It is Saturday afternoon, and there is no reason why men can't come if they want to; but the question is, Will they want to? I suppose John Greason would have come if he hadn't insulted me with suspecting that I could not be out for an hour after dark without being in some awful mischief, if that is what you mean. Now I don't suppose he will. I should not think he would. Good-night, mother; don't worry over it."

If Catherine did not sleep that night, there was no evidence of it in her brilliant face when she came down to breakfast the next morning. Her mother looked as if she had not closed her eyes, and Catherine shot a quick glance of anxiety and annoyance at her.

"For goodness' sake, mother, lie down after breakfast and see if you can't get a nap," she said, when the maid had gone into the kitchen

for more muffins. "You will not be fit to go this afternoon."

"I thought maybe I wouldn't," Catherine's mother replied, rather piteously. She had a high spirit of her own, but not much physical strength, and her indignation no longer served as a tonic.

"Nonsense!" returned Catherine. "Of course you are going. There you have that beautiful dress all ready—"

"I don't know—"

"*I* know."

"I thought perhaps *I* wouldn't go either," remarked Aunt Sarah, who was nibbling at some cereal, with an injured air.

"Of course *you* are going too. Haven't you got that handsome new bonnet on purpose? Goodness! you two don't want Greason's folks to think we are breaking our hearts because he went home last night and flung a box of candy at me. Mrs. Greason and Lottie and Mrs. Ames are sure to be there, with their eyes and ears open, too. Trust them. There is one thing—if I don't have to marry John, I shall be rid of his family, and I must confess that I always did wonder how I would get on with my in-laws."

"John is the best of them," acceded Sarah Gould, tearfully, taking another bit of well-

sweetened cereal. "I always said it wouldn't be the easiest thing in the world to get on with his folks."

"And I should have simply been obliged to combine with the whole lot Thanksgivings and Christmases and wedding anniversaries," said Catherine. "There's no loss without a considerable gain. Small gain does not seem the thing in this case. I think myself I have cleared a good six per cent." Catherine had considerable experience in business matters. She managed the property which kept them in comfort, young as she was. The two elder women were entirely helpless in that respect. After Catherine's father's death, his elder brother had taken charge, but since his death, two years before, Catherine had proved herself amply able to conduct matters. She was in reality rather a masterly girl. When she was out in the clear morning air, which bit like steel, for the roads were frost-bound and everything glittering with ice crystals, she held her head high and swung along with an instinct joy of existence, although she was encountering the first real trouble of her life. She could not remember when her father died. She had not particularly cared for her uncle, who had not particularly cared for her, and his death had not affected her. But she had been in love,

and was now, with John Greason, and what had happened last night was no light matter to her; but her pride and her innate joy in existence itself, aside from its conditions, sustained her like a sort of spiritual backbone. She thought, as she passed a house on the way and caught a glimpse of a girl's blond head at a window behind a row of red geraniums—a head which instantly ducked as if to avoid an exchange of courtesies—how foolish it was for any girl, and how inexplicable even, to allow herself to lose her health and good looks and all the other sweets of life simply because of a man. The girl with the blond head had been disappointed in love a year ago. She never had been seen out of the house after her lover married, and was said to be in a decline. Catherine felt a sort of joyous scorn for this girl as she swung along. She realized herself upon a height of emotional superiority. She contemplated the possibility of John Greason marrying another girl, and gave her head a proud toss. She could endure even that. She knew herself to be strong enough for anything. She thought of a new red silk gown which she was to wear that afternoon. She could see herself in it, and the men, if men there were, were crowding around her, and women too, for that matter. Women liked Catherine. She had an easy good nature,

which kept them from jealousy of her beauty. She thought that John Greason's mother and his sister Lottie and his married sister, Mrs. Edgar Ames, would be there, and how they would admire her. She was quite sure that John would have kept his own counsel, that he would not even have told his family of his broken engagement: that he would leave them to find it out for themselves. She was sure that her mother and aunt would have said nothing. She knew that they could not do so without a covert reflection upon herself, since, after all, she had not told where she had been, and although they did not doubt her, others might do so. Even popularity does not shield from the delight of a scandal, and Exbridge was a dull little village. She knew, although people liked her, they could no more resist talking about her, if they had the chance, than they could resist gazing at a sky-rocket on a July night. Pyrotechnics of any kind were simply irresistible to human beings deprived of the natural food of excitement. She knew that although her aunt was not shrewd, her mother was, and she knew that her mother would not tell, and would see to it that her aunt did not.

Catherine had a pleasant time decorating her friend's house for the tea. She enjoyed that sort of thing, and had really a genius for

it. She made the rooms charming, and headed efficaciously her corps of workers. That afternoon she achieved a social success in her red silk. Men came, and she was surrounded by them. She glowed with merriment and healthful enjoyment. John Greason's relatives were there, and extremely friendly. She knew that John had told nothing. In the midst of her pride and indignation she felt a thrill of approbation for his reticence. It was exactly what she herself would have done, what she did do. She told nobody anything; her mother and aunt told nobody; John continued to tell nobody. Of course his relatives first, then the whole village, finally discovered that he no longer went to see her, that the engagement was presumably broken; but beyond that they knew nothing. They surmised to the extent of their imaginations, but their imaginations failed them; they were always wide of the truth. Catherine came to get a certain amusement from the various reports which reached her from time to time, but apparently John Greason did not. He grew thin and old-looking. At last it was reported that Catherine Gould had treated him badly, that she had jilted him for a rich man in the city. When Catherine heard that, at a church supper, she turned upon her informer—a married friend of hers.

"There is not a word of truth in that, and you can tell everybody so," she said, her cheeks blazing.

"Then you didn't jilt him?"

"No, I did not."

The other girl stared at her with wondering eyes. The conclusion was almost evident that John had jilted Catherine, but in the face of Catherine's radiant joy in life and beauty it seemed ridiculous. However, gradually that report gained ground. John's mother came first to him with it. They were eating supper, on a Friday night, about a year from the day when he and Catherine had separated. John, his mother, his unmarried sister, and his married sister, who was one of the household, her husband being away on business most of the time, were at the table.

"I heard something this afternoon at the 'Improvement Club,'" John's mother remarked, as she poured the tea. She was a large, florid woman, and she looked imposing in her gray brocade waist trimmed with beaded passementerie over her high-corseted bust. She was the president of the "Exbridge Ladies' Improvement Club."

John's sister Lottie, who was slender and plain, cast a sly, scared glance at him with her light, prominent blue eyes. The mar-

ried sister, who was like her mother, echoed her.

"Yes, we heard a piece of news," said she. "Pass the biscuits, Lottie, please."

John ate his scalloped oysters and made no rejoinder. The women looked at one another doubtfully, but Mrs. Greason was afraid of nothing.

"We heard why you stopped going to see Catherine Gould," said she.

John took another mouthful of scalloped oysters. The mess was smoking hot and burned his tongue and throat, but he swallowed it grimly and said nothing.

Then Mrs. Ames spoke. "Yes, we heard you jilted her because she was too fond of having other men hanging about her," said she, with a slight repulsive smack of her full lips, as though over a sweet morsel.

Then John looked slowly from one to another, and his face was ashy pale. "It is a lie," said he, hoarsely.

"Then you didn't jilt her for that?" asked his sister, undaunted.

"I didn't jilt her at all. It is a damned lie!" said John, with almost a shout.

"Don't use such language as that, John," said his mother, severely, as if he were a little boy.

"We have just come from the club, and we have been discussing the alarming growth of profanity among men who call themselves gentlemen," remarked Mrs. Ames, with a superior air, which was like the rasp of a saw.

"Then don't say things to encourage the growth," sneered John.

"Then you didn't?" said Mrs. Greason.

"Didn't what, for Heaven's sake? I wonder how much men would use profane words if it were not for women!"

"That is right; heap all the blame upon the women. That is what Annie Drinkwater said was done, in the club this afternoon," said Mrs. Ames, with undisturbed ponderosity.

John said something under his breath.

"Jilt Catherine Gould," said Mrs. Greason, distinctly.

"No, I did not, once for all," replied John, fiercely.

"But she did not—"

"There was no jilting any way. Can't you women ever drop a subject?"

"Well, a man cannot expect to go with a girl as long as you went with Catherine Gould, and have her get all ready to be married except her wedding-dress. I know she had her underclothes ready, for she told Lottie so over a year ago—"

"She showed them to me," interposed Lottie, with a squeaky little voice.

"Yes, she showed them to her," said Mrs. Greason, triumphantly. "What I was going to say was, you can't expect—"

But John had pushed his chair back violently and left the table. They heard his heavy rush up-stairs and the slam of his room door.

"He is just like his father," remarked Mrs. Greason, with an odd tone, compounded of respect for the dead and a remembrance of his faults, which was simply due to her own dignity.

Mrs. Ames echoed her in a similar voice. "Yes, father was close-mouthed just like John," said she.

"We never knew what the trouble was between father and Mr. Sears," Lottie said, in her tiny squeak, which was not in the least accusative, like the other voices. Lottie was simply statistic, but for some reason that made her more irritating to people. One can resent accusation, but one is utterly helpless before statistics, and especially statistics delivered in a squeak.

"I should have found out if Mrs. Sears had not died within a week after it happened," said Mrs. Greason. "Eliza Sears never could keep a thing to herself, but Amos Sears was always a good deal like your father. I don't

suppose he ever let on to any human being before he died what the trouble was."

"John won't either," said Mrs. Ames.

"I'm sorry about it," her mother remarked, although as she spoke she took another spoonful of scalloped oysters. "Catherine Gould is a handsome girl, and she has money, and she will have more. All that consoles me is, I always have wondered how we should get along with her. Unless I miss my guess, she has got an awful temper."

"Yes, I know she has," assented Mrs. Ames. "I shouldn't wonder if that was the trouble, if they quarrelled over something."

"It never seemed to me that Catherine's aunt Sarah was very close-mouthed," observed Lottie.

"Well, Catherine and her mother are, and they'll see to it that she is. Poor Sarah Gould never dares speak unless those two women say she may," returned Mrs. Greason. "Well, your father was a good, upright man, although of course he had his little faults like all of us, and I can see them right over in your brother; but, after all, it is better to be a stone jar than a sieve."

"Not with your own folks," said Lottie.

"You can't expect a stone jar to turn into a sieve even for your own folks," retorted her

mother. "You might have a much worse brother than John." Mrs. Greason spoke with some asperity. After all, John was her favorite. They were much alike. He had inherited his close mouth and his disposition generally from her to a much greater extent than from his father, but Mrs. Greason was not given to self-analysis, only to self-assertion, and she did not see herself repeated in her son.

Another year went on. People talked less about and speculated less about the breaking-off of the engagement between John Greason and Catherine Gould. Nobody had made any discoveries concerning it. John and Catherine went their ways as usual. Catherine seemed to grow handsomer and more brilliant every year. Everybody wondered why she did not become engaged to some one else. As for John, he was said never to look at a girl. This fact probably hurt Catherine a little in spite of her popularity. There were those who made insinuations that her temper had been the cause of the trouble. However, men did not seem to fear it. When a lawyer from New York came to Exbridge on business concerning the settling of an old estate, and remained two summer months at the village inn, and paid much attention to Catherine, people assumed that surely she would win him, or consent to be won.

But the lawyer went away, and the woman who kept the village post-office said, after three months had elapsed, that not one letter from New York had arrived for Catherine, and thus that matter was considered settled. Women began to say that Catherine would live and die unmarried in spite of her good looks and prosperous circumstances, and they opined that she felt slighted, for all her high bearing, and all the more so when John Greason bought the beautiful hill lot on the west side of the brook which divided the village as with a silver ribbon, and began building a house which to simple village tastes was fairly palatial. The story went abroad that John had met a girl in the mountains the summer before, when the New York lawyer had been hanging about Catherine, and that he was shortly to be married—in fact, immediately after the house was finished. It was a mild winter, and the house had been covered in before snow fell, and work was progressing rapidly. People said John would be married in April. None of the Greasons said anything to confirm or deny this rumor. In fact, they themselves were as much puzzled, and more so, than people outside. They had asked John, but he, as usual, was non-communicative. They had imagined every marriageable girl in the village as being his

prospective wife, but as he never went out evenings they themselves were forced into the conclusion that he might have met somebody in the mountains. "I do hope she won't be a tiffiky city girl who has been used to servants all her life and won't know a blessed thing about keeping that beautiful new house in order," said Mrs. Greason to her daughters. They were all secretly worried, although they assumed airs of calm wisdom when abroad.

Catherine Gould could see the live glow of the new roof from her own room, and she wondered if, unhappily, she concealed it. She had a new coat that winter, red and fur-lined, and she looked more beautiful and radiant than ever.

It was the last of March, one evening, when the heretofore mild winter had suddenly turned back fiercely upon its tracks, and the cold was bitter in a white moonlit night, when John came to see her. The "Exbridge Improvement Club" had met at the Gould house that afternoon, and Catherine had the best parlor decorated with carnations, and the lamps were still lighted. A hot-air furnace had been put in that winter, so all the rooms were warm. Catherine, her mother, and aunt were sitting in the parlor talking over the club meeting, when the doorbell rang. The two elder women

scuttled across the hall to the sitting-room, and closed the door, all except a crack, and Catherine answered the ring. The one maid was out. There stood John Greason, as pale as death, and seemingly enveloped in a column of wintry air. Catherine stared at him incredulously for a second, after he had said good-evening in a hoarse voice. She could not believe her eyes.

"May I come in?" he asked, and the girl regained command of herself.

"Certainly," she replied, in a crisp voice, and stood aside, with the least perceptible straightening of her graceful figure and toss backward of her head. But poor John Greason did not even look at her. He fairly stumbled over the threshold, and forgot to take off his hat before removing clumsily his great-coat. Catherine, who was somewhat pale herself, although perfectly self-possessed, stood watching him.

When his coat and hat were in their old places on the hat-tree he cast an appealing, doglike glance at the girl, then at the parlor door.

"Will you go into the parlor?" said Catherine.

As John followed her into the room, both he and Catherine heard quite distinctly Mrs. Gould say, in a tone of unmixed wonder, "It's John

Greason," and they heard her sister-in-law say, "Land!"

John turned after he had entered and closed the parlor door softly.

"Why do you close the door?" asked Catherine, and there was hostility in her voice.

"I wanted to say something to you," replied John, feebly.

"There can be nothing which you need say to me which necessitates the door being closed," replied Catherine.

Then suddenly something boyish, almost childlike, in the man's piteous glance filled her with compassion. "Very well," she said, and motioned John towards a seat. She seated herself at some little distance from him. The lamplight shone full on his face, and she saw how thin he had grown, what deep lines had come in his forehead, and how pale and nervous he looked. "Aren't you well?" she asked, abruptly.

"Very well, thank you." Both sat still for a few moments, then John rose and made a plunge across the room, stumbling over a rug, and almost fell into a chair beside Catherine. "Will you promise not to speak until I have said something?" he asked, in a voice which Catherine hardly knew for his.

"Yes. Why?"

John commenced speaking rapidly, as if he were repeating a lesson learned by rote. "My new house is all done," said he, "and I have been looking at furniture. I can have it all ready to move into soon. I don't want you to tell me where you went that night. Don't speak. Will you marry me and live in my new house with me? Don't tell me where you had been that night. Don't speak. Will you?"

Catherine stared at him. "Are you out of your senses, John Greason?"

"No; don't speak."

Catherine sat mute, gazing at him. She was as pale as he now.

"Will you forgive me and marry me?" asked John, and his voice was almost a groan. Great drops stood on his forehead.

Catherine had a quick sense of humor. "How can I tell you if I don't speak?" said she.

"I mean, don't tell me where you were that night, but only if you will have me, after all."

Catherine continued to stare at him. "John Greason, how do you think I can marry you if I don't tell?" said she.

"You can. Don't tell."

"But I must. It was all over nothing. I got angry because you were so domineering. I had only—"

"Don't speak, don't speak," cried John Greason, in a kind of agony.

"Well, why not? What is the matter with you, John Greason?"

"If you speak, I can never have any opinion of myself afterwards. After treating you as I did, after suspecting—I can never be a man in my own eyes if you tell me, Catherine."

"It is the only condition under which I can marry you."

"Then," said John, hopelessly, "I cannot marry you, Catherine. I shall not be fit to marry you afterwards."

"Nonsense!"

"It is true. Oh, Catherine, don't speak, for my sake!"

Catherine gazed at him. She was not a subtle girl—she could not understand—but she had strong maternal instincts, and she saw, as if through a magnifying lens of sympathy and pity, her lover's tragic face, with the pale, thin cheeks and the sweat-beaded forehead; and, moreover, although she had held her head high, she had always loved him. Suddenly, with a soft, birdlike movement, she rose, pulled his head against her shoulder, and wiped his forehead. "What a goose you are!" she whispered.

"Then you will, Catherine?—you do love me, after all?"

"'WHAT A GOOSE YOU ARE!' SHE WHISPERED"

"Love is not a thing one flings aside like a glove," said Catherine. "I could have lived in spite of it, and had a good time, too, but a girl like me, when she loves, means it."

"Then you will marry me?"

"I don't know whether I can or not, unless—"

"Oh, Catherine, don't speak. Don't tell me, for God's sake!"

"Then I must have a week to think it over," said Catherine, leaving him and sitting down again. "I can't make up my mind all in a minute to marry you after all this time and not tell you. I am not sure that you will not always suspect me."

"Catherine, don't you see, don't you know, that if you do tell, you must always suspect me of suspecting, and that if you don't tell, you will know I don't?"

Catherine sat pondering. "It is such awful nonsense," she said at length, with a half-sigh.

"It is awful earnest to me. Catherine, I can't marry you if you tell."

"Do you really mean that if I were to tell, and you knew that it was all nothing at all, that you would not love me enough to marry me?"

"I should love you, but I would not let you marry a man who suspected you."

Catherine laughed again. "Well, it is all

too much for me," she said. "You split hairs, where I only look at things. Well, John, I think enough of you, but you must wait a week."

"To-day is Friday. Will you let me know a week from to-night?"

"Yes."

"Then I'll go now," said John, rising.

Catherine wished him to remain longer, but she would not say so. She went with him to the door and assisted him to put on his coat. He fumbled pitifully with the sleeves. The sitting-room door was still ajar. When the two stood in the outer door, John bent towards Catherine. Then he drew back.

"No," he said, "I had better not until I know. It isn't fair, and I have been unfair enough as it is. Good-night, Catherine."

"Good-night, John," said Catherine. She closed the door behind him and went into the parlor. She sat down, her face a mask of reflection. Presently her mother and aunt entered the room, almost timidly.

"Well?" said her mother, after she had hemmed twice.

"It was John," said Catherine.

Her mother and aunt looked at each other.

"Well?" said her mother again.

"Mother, I can't say a word about it. I

can't tell you anything for a week," said Catherine. "I don't know myself what I am going to do."

"Then he—" began her mother.

"Mother, I can't tell you or Aunt Sarah a word to-night," Catherine said, decisively.

Then she went out of the room, and soon her bedroom lamp flashed as she went up-stairs, and she called out good-night.

"Well, she's close enough," said Mrs. Gould.

"Her father was awful close, too," said Sarah.

"He was the best husband that ever lived, if he was close," returned Mrs. Gould, defiantly.

"I ain't saying a word against him, Martha."

"You'd better not. Catherine is quite right in being close until she knows herself. You aren't close at all, Sarah Gould, and she doesn't want anything all over town until she knows."

"I never said a single word about their quarrelling," returned Sarah, with an injured air.

"You didn't dare to. You dropped your yarn when you came in here, and it runs 'way back to the sitting-room, twisted round all the furniture. You've got one piece of work getting it unsnarled. Wait. I'll help you."

That night, long after her mother and aunt were asleep, Catherine Gould, muffled up in her warm flannel dressing-gown, sat beside her window gazing out at the wintry, moonlit night.

She was debating with herself whether she could or could not live without the usual lot of women which her lover had offered her that night. She was quite sure that, if she did not marry John Greason, she would never marry at all. He had been so long in her dreams as her husband that she could not violate them. Catherine was an inherently constant girl. If she did not marry John Greason, she would always love him, unless, indeed, he should marry another woman. In such a case it would go hard with her, but she would wrench all love for him from her heart. But she knew that John, if he did not marry her, would never marry another woman. He was as constant as she. She had never, although he had deserted her, believed in the rumors that he was about to marry some one else. But she, on her part, was unwilling to marry him unless all shadow of secrecy was removed from between them. She told herself that it was hard upon her. First he had demanded that she tell; now he demanded that she should not. Both demands were unreasonable. In spite of her love for him and pity for him, she had a sense of wrath. She wondered if she could not live her life without marriage at all; if she had not better let it all slip away from her, and give him an answer in the negative the very next day. She said to herself

that there was no need whatever of prolonging the agony. She had asked for a week, but a few hours were in reality all that were necessary. She gazed out on the white level of the square front yard, lit by snowlight and moonlight. She gazed up at the indeterminate colored sky through which the moon sailed in her golden halo. She gazed at the few stars which the brilliance of the moon left visible. Sparkles as of precious crystals gleamed out here and there from all the landscape. Everything was white and pure and glittering, full of symbolism of the ineffable holiness and passionless of that which is outside the heat of human life. She realized dimly that if she were to say "No" to her lover, that in spite of her radiant beauty, which was of a kind to endure, in spite of her triumphant philosophy of obtaining whatever she could from the minor joys of existence, and not allowing her body or soul to become lean through deprivation of the larger ones, she would, in reality, live her life and die her death, as it were, in that cold glitter outside her window. It would be peaceful and beautiful and good, but she would miss the best and sweetest of food for her heart. There was nothing of the nun about her. She was religious, but she was not ascetic. It would have been different if she had never loved any man at all. Then she

might have been satisfied and quite content, but the aspect of that cold and virgin radiance outside seemed terrible to her with that leaping flame in her heart.

The next day she gave in. She wrote to John Greason and asked him to come that evening. Her mother and aunt could not go to bed until he had left; although it was late, they were so curious. When the front door had closed after him, Catherine went into the sitting-room and looked at the two elder women, her eyes full of dark fire, her cheeks like roses, her full lips breaking into smiles.

"Well," she said, "I am going to be married the 5th of April, and live in that new house."

Catherine's mother turned pale, her aunt trembled and flushed. Then they both rose and solemnly kissed her.

"Oh, there is one thing," said Catherine, with assumed carelessness. "You must neither of you ever say anything about the trouble which has been between John and me. It is all over now."

"But where were you?" asked her mother, in a whisper. Her aunt looked at her with eyes which seemed able to pierce secrecy itself.

"That is never to be mentioned," replied Catherine, with dignity.

"You don't mean you haven't told him yet?" gasped her mother.

"He did not wish me to."

"Won't you ever?"

"Not if he feels as he does now—that he does not want me to."

"Land!" said Sarah Gould.

"It does seem to me as if she might tell her own mother, if she wouldn't tell him," said Mrs. Gould, after the girl had gone up-stairs.

"She is close, just the way her father was," said Sarah.

"Her father was the best man that ever lived, and she's got a right to keep her own counsel if she wants to," said Mrs. Gould, sharply. "I am glad she hasn't got to live with his folks, and that new house is the handsomest one in town."

"Yes, it is," said Sarah, "and I never could see how she would get along with his folks."

"She could get along with anybody as far as that goes," retorted Mrs. Gould, with inconsistency.

"I wasn't saying anything against her."

"I don't see why you should. She and her father before her have been the salt of the earth."

Catherine and John were married on the fifth of April, and went to live in the new house.

People speculated as to what the quarrel between them had been about, and how they happened to become reconciled. They prophesied that they would not be happy. "Both of them are too set and too close to ever get along," said they. But they became as a model of married happiness. They were radiant in love for and utterly content in each other. And John Greason, living with his wife as the years passed and her beauty dimmed, and wontedness dulled somewhat the first color of existence for both of them, realized that the little secret of hers which he had never known, that one bit of her own individuality which was outside his ken, caused her to always retain for his lifelong charm her virgin mystery; and her lined but sweet forehead between her silvering folds of hair was always haloed by that thought behind it which he had never known and never would know.

THE GOLD

THE GOLD

THE colonies had but recently declared war with the old country; and Abraham Duke, being an able-bodied man, although no longer young, was going to fight for the cause. He was fastening on his old sword, which his father before him had wielded well, and his wife Catherine was standing watching him, with an angry cant to her head. "Wherefore cannot you tell me where the gold is, Abraham Duke?" said she.

Abraham Duke regarded his wife with stern melancholy, and his glance of fixedness in his own purpose was more impregnable than any fort.

"I can tell you not, Catherine," replied he, "because no man can tell any woman anything which he wants not the whole world to know, and there are plenty of evil-disposed folk abroad in these troublous times, and 'tis for your own sake, since, in case robbers come, you can tell

them without perjury that you know not where the gold is."

"For *my* sake!" returned Catherine, with a high sniff. "You tell me not for fear I shall spend the gold, and you always loved gold better than your wife. You fear lest I should buy a new gown to my back, or a new cap-ribbon. Never fear, Abraham Duke, for I have gone poorly clad so long that, faith, a new cap-ribbon even would frighten me."

"I have given you all that I could, Catherine," returned Abraham, gravely.

"But now that you have all this wealth, five thousand pounds, you hide it away, and tell me not where it is—me, your wife, who has kept your house for scarce anything save a poor measure of daily bread, all these years. You wrong me, Abraham Duke."

But Abraham Duke only kept his mouth shut more tightly. He was perhaps ten years older than his wife, but he was handsome, with a stern, almost a sad, majesty of carriage. It was only some few weeks before that the money, a legacy from his father in England, five thousand pounds in gold, had come on the English ship *The Queen Mary*. It was the day afterwards that he had sent his wife away by stage-coach fifty miles inland on a visit to her sister, Mistress Abigail Endicott. He had charged

her while on her visit to say nothing about the five thousand pounds, but well he knew that she had talked of nothing but the gold, and had bragged much, and now, when she had returned and her husband was about to join the army, the gold was hidden, and she was to know nothing of it and have nothing of it all to spend until her husband's return. He regarded her at the last with the sort of restrained tenderness of his kind. She was still a most charming woman to look upon, fair-skinned and fair-haired, and, in spite of her complaints, attired daintily, although she had spun and woven the blue petticoat which she wore, and worked herself the lace kerchief which veiled her bosom, and the cap which crowned her fair head. "When I come home, you shall have what you will to spend," said he, "but not now. Now is a time when a good wife needs nothing except the wherewithal to live, with her goodman away, and war in the land."

"Abraham, tell me where you have hid the gold?"

"I will not tell you, Catherine," said Abraham Duke, and now he was all equipped to start. "If, perchance, I should never come back, you may go to Parson Rawson, who holds a sealed letter for you, but in no case will he give it to you unless I fall and he has ample proof

of it. He has promised me upon his honor, and no man living ever knew Parson Ebenezer Rawson to forswear his word."

"And in the mean time, while you fight I am to stay alone at home and starve."

"There is no need for a woman of industry to starve in a good home, with a bound boy to cut wood and dig the garden for her, and cows and sheep and chickens," said Abraham.

"But should the enemy come and take them all, as they may do, since we are on the seashore!" cried Catherine.

"In that case you will go to your sister, Mistress Endicott, in Rexham," replied Abraham. He was advancing towards his wife for a decorous last embrace, should she be disposed to yield it in her rancor, when little Harry Evarts, the son of Abraham's friend and neighbor, the goldsmith, came rushing in, and he was all bloody, and his pretty face was deadly white, and his fair curls, like a girl's, seemed to stand up and wave like plumes over his head, he was in such a fright. Then Catherine Duke forgot the gold, for she had no child of her own, and she loved the boy. "Harry! Harry!" she shrieked, running to him and holding him to her breast. "What is it, child? Speak! Are you hurt?"

"Father! father!" gasped the boy, and then he hung almost lifeless on Catherine's arm.

"What ails your father? Speak!" cried Catherine.

"Father is killed," replied the boy, faintly.

"Killed! What, your father killed! Abraham, do you hear? Joseph Evarts is killed. Hear what this child says! Run, quick, Abraham!"

But when Catherine turned to look at her husband there was no one there, and she for the moment thought nothing of it, inferring that at the child's first word he had hastened to see what had happened to his friend.

But Abraham Duke did not return, and it was known on good authority that he had never set foot in Joseph Evarts' house to ascertain what had happened to him, but had made his way straight out of the village to the army, the company of which he was a member being assembled in Suffield, about ten miles away.

Catherine, although she had had the difference with her husband concerning the hiding of the gold, felt hurt that he should have slipped away in such wise without a word of farewell while she was in such anxiety over the bereft child, but she had no suspicions then, or afterwards, and nobody spoke of suspicions

to her. But suspicions there were, although they slumbered in the general excitement of the war and the ever-recurring rumors of a ship of the enemy in sight and about to land in the harbor of the little village of South Suffield. It was said that Abraham Duke was the last one seen entering and leaving the house of Joseph Evarts the evening before his dead body was found by his little son, who was returning from a visit to his grandmother; his mother was dead. Little Harry Evarts had, indeed, found the door of his home blocked by something, and pushed with all his childish strength, and found, when the door yielded a gap, that it was the body of his father, dead of a sword-thrust in the side, which blocked the door. Evarts had been a goldsmith by trade in the old country; since he had been in the new, finding little opportunity for the exercise of his craft, he had supported himself and his little son by working his farm. It was held that Abraham Duke had gone the night before to bid him farewell. Mistress Prudence Dexter, who lived next door, had distinctly seen him enter and leave, and she had seen no one else that evening, and it was bright moonlight and she had been sitting beside her window with no light, to save candles. Still, in spite of the sinister report, Abraham Duke's standing—he

was tithing - man in the meeting - house, and esteemed by all—and the utter absence of any known motive served to keep the suspicion well within bounds, and would have done so even had not everybody's mind been distracted by the war and the rumors of strange sails on the horizon.

Meantime Catherine Duke lived on alone, save for the bound boy, who was none too bright as to his wits, although strong and a good worker, and night and day she searched for the gold, which she was confident her husband had hidden somewhere about the house, if he had not buried it in the field. Her husband had not been gone twenty - four hours before all the usual hiding-places of treasure were overhauled, such as old teapots, the drawers of dressers, secret drawers, and the clock. She searched the clock particularly, since she heard that her husband had been seen coming from Joseph Evarts' with some of the works of the clock that night before he went away. Prudence Dexter had averred that she had distinctly seen the dangling pendulum of a clock from under Abraham's cloak as he went down the street. Catherine, knowing that the dead man, Joseph Evarts, had been a cunning workman in many ways, thought that he might have rigged for his friend a secret closet in the clock,

and she searched it well, but found nothing. She thought that it might have been possible for her husband to carry the main body of the clock under his cloak, for the purpose of the secret closet, but, although she sounded every inch and poked the inmost recesses of the clock well over, no gold did she discover. She therefore let it be, ticking with the solemn majesty of its kind; it was an eight-day clock, taller than a man, standing like Time itself in the corner of the living-room, and casting a shadow like the shadow of a man across the floor every morning when the sun shone into the room. But she searched, after she had searched the clock, every inch of the house. She even had the hearthstones taken up, she and the dull-witted bound boy, working by candlelight, with the curtains drawn, that the neighbors might suspect nothing, and she replaced them in a masterly fashion; for Catherine Duke was in reality a masterly woman. And then she had out many of the chimney bricks, as many as she dared, and she even had up some of the flooring, but she found nothing.

Then she and the bound boy dug up the cellar bottom, and then the bound boy ploughed every inch of land which had hitherto remained uncultivated. She could do that openly, and people began to say that Catherine would make

more of the farm than her husband had done. But the land that was too stony for the plough she was more secret about, she and the boy digging it up by moonlight and replacing the sods.

Once she ventured forth with a lantern in her impatience, but the light, seen flitting along the field near the shore, occasioned a rumor in the village that a ship of the British had landed and a drum beat to arms. Then all the old men and boys left in the place sallied forth, and Catherine and the bound boy, whose name, which belied his character, was Solomon—last name he had none at all that anybody knew, for he was a foundling—had hard work to reach the house undiscovered, although she blew out the lantern and scudded for her life with her petticoats lifted, while the boy sped with her, the more afraid that he knew not what he feared.

However, all Catherine's searching came to nothing, although she worked hard—and hard work it was, with what she had to do on the farm. No woman in South Suffield was considered a better housewife than she, and she had to live up to her reputation. She and the boy sheared and washed sheep, and she spun and wove the wool. She tended the flax and made of that lengths of linen cloth; she made her soap and her candles, and kept her house as

neat as wax, and all the while the search for the hidden gold was in her mind. Many a time in the dead of night would she, lying awake and pondering over it, and striving to place her own mind in the attitude of her husband's when he had hidden the treasure, think of another place where she had not looked, and be up, with her candle lit, and over the house, in her bed-gown, to find nothing at all.

Catherine grew old with the loneliness and the ever-increasing wrath with her husband, who had so mistreated her after her years of self-denial and toil for his sake. The sense of injury is like a fermenting canker in the mind when once it is allowed to work with no protest. Catherine's pretty, round face grew long and sour, her smooth forehead knitted. Her blue eyes got an expression of sharp peering which never left them. She even looked at her friends as if she suspected that the hiding-place of the gold might be in their minds. And yet all the time she had in reality no desire for the gold itself, for she had enough and to spare. Had she found the gold she would directly have hid it again and spent not one shilling until her husband's return, but the sense of injury ever spurred her on with a goading which almost produced madness. She asked herself over and over why she should not know—why

her husband, for whom she had saved and toiled, could not have trusted her? Of a Sabbath-day, when she went to meeting, she regarded the parson, Ebenezer Rawson, with a covert hatred, since he held the sealed letter, and had been trusted to a greater extent than she. Sometimes, although, in spite of her wrath and sense of ill treatment, which warped her mind, she still loved her husband and prayed for his safety, the imagination would come to her how, in the case of his falling before the enemy, she should go to the parson and demand the sealed letter, and know at last what she had a right to know—the hiding-place of the gold.

After her husband had been away some six months and she had had one letter from him, with not a word about the gold, she dressed herself in her best—in her red cloak, which she had had as a bride and kept carefully, and a hat with a plume which would have become her had she not gotten the expression on her fair face of the seeker after dross, which disfigures more than aught in the world—and she made her way to the parson's house. He was a widower, and always had a kindly word for a pretty woman, although esteemed, as her husband had said, a man who kept his own counsel. Past the parson's housekeeper, an ancient aunt of his, declaring that she had need of

spiritual consolation, and leaving her staring, suspicious because of the red cloak and the plume, she marched into the study, lined with books which damned all mankind by reason of the love of God, according to the tenets of the day, and she found the parson at his desk, with his forehead knitted over the tenthly of his next Sabbath-day's sermon. And then calling to her aid old blandishments of hers, she beset the parson for the letter, although the conditions of its delivery were not fulfilled, and she gave good and sufficient reasons why she should know the secret, since lately the rumors of the enemy on the coast had increased, and she argued that she should know the hiding-place of the treasure, that she might bury it safely away from the greed of the redcoats.

But Parson Ebenezer Rawson, who was a handsome man in a powdered wig, and had something of the diplomat in him, only laughed, and spoke to her with a pleasant chiding, the while he noted that she was no longer, in spite of her red cloak and her feather, as goodly to see as she had been, and had an apposite verse of Scripture concerning the frailty of the flesh and the evanescence of beauty enter his mind.

"Mistress Duke," said Parson Rawson, "it truly seemeth to me that, since you yourself

cannot find the gold, no safer hiding-place can be discovered from the enemy."

Catherine blushed high with anger. "But I am in want of goods for household use," said she. In response to that, Parson Rawson surveyed her rounded form and the sumptuous folds of her red cloak, and said that he could not betray his trust, since his word, once given, was like a lock and seal upon his soul, and that did she want for the necessaries of life he would advance the money needful to her upon a loan.

At last Catherine Duke went away, still unsatisfied, and she walked—for thoroughly feminine she was—with a graceful movement, being conscious of the carriage of her head and the folds of her red cloak, until she was out of view of the parson's windows, and then she broke into an angry switch, and she even wept like a crossed child, as she went along where there were no houses.

Before she came to her own house, some quarter of a mile distant, she had to pass the house where Joseph Evarts had lived and wherein he had come to his death by foul means. Catherine Duke was not a nervous woman, nor timid, but as stanch and stout-hearted as women needed to be in those times. Still, for all that, and although she had not heard of the suspicions which were directed against her hus-

band, she never passed this house without an involuntary quickening of her steps, especially when it was nightfall, as now, and she was alone. The house had remained deserted since poor Joseph Evarts's dead body had been carried forth from it, for the little boy had been taken to live with his grandmother in an adjoining town. Now, in this gray, weather-stained house seemed to abide the spirit of mystery and murder, and to glare forth from the desolate blanks of its windows upon all passers-by. Thus Catherine Duke, stout-hearted as she was, quickened her steps that evening, and scudded by in her red cloak, with her best plume waving in the breeze; but as she passed she gave a terrified roll of her blue eyes at the house, and she could have sworn that she saw a gleam of light in one of the rooms of the second story. She looked instinctively at the opposite side of the road for a light which could produce a reflection, but there was no house there, and no bonfire. She looked again, and it seemed certain to her that there was a candlelight in the east room on the second floor. Then she fairly ran, for a vague horror was upon her, and it seemed to her that she heard footsteps behind her, although, when she reached her own door and turned around, with the latch in her hand and Solomon gazing

at her from the lighted living-room, there was not a person in sight on the road, which made a sharp turn a short distance from the Duke house. That turn swerved the road from the sea, and gave room on both sides for houses. The Evarts house was on the sea-side of the road. All that could be seen from the front door of the Duke house was the desolate, moaning waste of waters, which had lately acquired a terrible significance as a possible highway for the enemy, and the road, with no dwelling as far as the turn. Catherine called Solomon to the door. "Look," said she, sharply, "and see if you can spy out anybody on the road."

Solomon came and stood beside her, projecting his simple, gaping face, with its prominent light-blue eyes, into the gathering gloom, and whimpered—for he had some vague idea that he was being blamed, and he held his mistress in awe—that he saw no one. "Go as far as the turn in the road," said Catherine, imperiously, "and see if you see anybody; and, if you do, come back quickly and let us lock the door."

Solomon started, although he was afraid—for he was more afraid of his mistress's anger than of any unknown quantity—but she called him back. "If you see no one on the road," said she, "keep on until you reach the Evarts house, and look and see if you spy a light in the east

chamber." Solomon sped away, although his legs trembled under him, for the fear in his mistress's heart infected his own.

Catherine went into the house and hung on the porridge-kettle, and very soon Solomon came back, saying that he had seen no one, and there was no light in the east chamber of the Evarts house, but there was a boat moored behind the house, on the sea-shore.

"You cannot have seen rightly," said Catherine, for now her confidence had returned. "You saw the old wreck that has lain behind the house for the last three years."

"Nay, mistress, 'twas a boat," persisted the boy; but when Catherine insisted that he had seen wrongly, he yielded and agreed with her, and said it was the wreck, for he had no mind of his own when the pressure of another was brought to bear upon it.

But the poor lad was right, and it had been well for poor Catherine Duke had she heeded him and taken the candle-gleam in the chamber of the deserted house and the boat on the sand behind it as a warning, instead of recovering her bravery of outlook and going about her evening tasks as usual. After supper she set Solomon to paring apples to dry, and she herself spun at her flax-wheel. They found her hard by it the next day, and she was murdered

even as Joseph Evarts had been; but she had not come to her death so easily, for she had been tortured first, and there were the marks of fire on her feet and hands. As for the bound boy, he had leaped out of the window as the men beat down the door, and he had sped away on his long legs, with what little wit he had ever owned wellnigh gone forever. When he was found and brought back, he shook like one with palsy, and he went through his life so, and he could only speak in disjointed stammers. As for answering questions to any purpose, there was no hope of it from him, although the people gathered some confirmation of what they at first suspected, that Catherine had been first tortured to make her reveal the hiding-place of her gold, and then, when she did not reveal it, as she could not, poor soul, she was finished. Then the whole house had been ransacked for the gold, but the robbers and murderers found it no more than Catherine had done, although people were not sure of it. Indeed, it was said by many that the men, who were supposed to have come ashore in the boat which had been moored behind the Evarts house, and which had been seen by a man passing as well as by Solomon, had found the gold and taken it away. Catherine had talked much, to her own hurt, about the treasure, and there

were stragglers from the army, as well as the enemy, to fear. Some said they were British soldiers who had come ashore in the boat, and some said they were men from the Colonial army, a company of which had been recently stationed for a short time at Suffield, but no one ever knew certainly.

When Abraham Duke came home, with only one arm, having lost the other by a British shot, he found a deserted home and a devastated farm, for there had been a raid by the enemy after Catherine's death. They had left the house standing, with its contents, but the livestock had been taken.

Abraham lived on alone, and worked his poor fields painfully, being so crippled with only one sound arm and hand, and he barely kept soul and body together, for, if the gold had not been stolen, he made no use of it. Sometimes the neighbors, albeit grudgingly and doubtfully, being still uncertain as to whether he was hoarding his treasure or not, came and helped the poor man with his scanty harvesting. However, they seemed to meet with but little gratitude, for Abraham Duke, always taciturn and cold of bearing, had become more so. He spoke to no man unless he were first spoken to, and then he made scant reply. And although he still attended all the services on the Sabbath-

day in the meeting-house, he had given up his office of tithing-man, and would not have it; and people said he had doctrinal doubts, because of his afflictions, which were not to his credit, even if he were innocent of the crime which those who were more ready to think evil laid at his door.

As time went on, people looked more and more askance at him, for his face grew more and more bitter and forbidding, even terrifying. The children became afraid of him, and gradually the old suspicion became more assured. He was held (although no one had any proof, and, there being no known motive for the crime, there was no talk of bringing him to justice) as a man accursed, and when he was helped it was more and more grudgingly and with serious doubts as to the blessings to be received for the deed.

Joseph Evarts's son had grown up, and he was living in his father's old house with his grandmother, who still lived, although very old, and never did Abraham Duke pass the house that he was not conscious of the young man's eyes upon him. Abraham had become aware of the suspicion, and it looked more keenly from Harry Evarts's eyes than any other's. Abraham rarely looked the young man in the face, for it had become to him the face of an aveng-

ing fate. He went past the house with his head bent, but always he knew there was an eye upon him—if not the young man's, his grandmother's, for she too suspected, and voiced her suspicions openly. Her old face, set in the narrow window-frame, was as malignant as a witch's upon Abraham Duke passing by, and he felt it, although he did not look up.

Affairs grew worse and worse with him. Rheumatism beset him one winter, and he was crippled with that, as well as his maimed arm and his age, for he was now an old man. He sat all day by his fireless hearth; for it was often fireless, since he could not cut wood nor hire it cut, and often he went a day without food, for he was more and more abhorred for the shadow of suspicion of an evil deed which had fallen upon him. Old Parson Rawson had died years before. He had given up the sealed letter to Abraham when he returned from the army, and Abraham had taken it without a word, and nobody knew what had become of it.

Abraham Duke lived on, hanging to life with a feeble clutch, like an old leaf to an autumn bough, and he was near eighty, and suffering all that one could suffer and live. He was slowly freezing and starving to death, and the occasional aid from his kind only served to prolong his misery. At last, when he was eighty, there

came a fierce winter, and one morning Harry Evarts, who had lately married, and whose heart, embittered with suspicion and the desire for vengeance, was somewhat softened by the thankfulness for love, thought of the old man, and, walking down to the turn of the road, and seeing no smoke from the chimney, he returned home for his hand-sled, and drew a good store of fire-wood, with a basket of provisions, to the Duke house.

It was a bright, freezing morning, a day glittering as if strung with diamonds, and the wind from the north was like a flail of death. Harry Evarts shuddered as he dragged his sled up to the door of the Duke house, and he hesitated a second for dread of what he might find when he entered. Then he heard a sweet voice from behind calling, and the girl he had married came running to join him, her fair face all glowing with the cold.

When she came alongside, Harry pounded on the door, and a horrible, dull echo, as of the vacancy of death itself, came in their ears. The young wife, Elizabeth, caught hold of her husband's arm, and she was almost weeping. "Oh, Harry! oh, Harry!" she whispered. "The poor old man must be dead."

Harry shut his mouth hard and pounded again, and again came the echo like a voice

of desolate mockery from the outside of life. Then Harry shut his mouth harder, and opened the door, which was unlocked, as if the old man had left it on the latch for death, and he entered, Elizabeth shrinking behind him.

And on the hearth sat old Abraham Duke, frozen and starved, but his face had an expression of such exceeding peace and humility that even the girl was not frightened, but she began to weep bitterly. "Poor old man! oh, poor old man!" she sobbed. "And he does not look, dead, as he did alive."

The room was full of brilliant sunlight, but bitter cold, and on the hearth were only ashes, but the andirons and the tops of the fire-set caught the sunlight and glowed warmly. So also did the ornaments on the desk and the high-boy and the clock, and the pendulum of the clock, which still ticked, seemed to swing in an arc of gold. Harry was deadly white, standing looking at the old man on the hearth. Elizabeth continued to sob; then, being led by her sweet, womanly instincts, she went nearer to the old man, and placed one of her little hands with a caressing gesture like a blessing on his sunken forehead. Then she started. "Harry," she said—"Harry, there is a letter in his hand."

Harry did not stir. He was thinking of his

father, and how he had come home to find him lying dead across the door.

"Harry," said the girl again, "there is a letter." Then she reached down and softly took the letter from the dead man's hand, which seemed to yield it up willingly. "Harry, the letter is for you!" cried Elizabeth, in an awed whisper.

Then she handed the letter to her husband. "Open it," said she.

"I can't," said the young man, hoarsely, for he was fighting a fight with himself.

"I will open it!" cried the girl, who was full of quick impulses, and she broke the seal. There were only a few words in the letter, which was, in fact, more a memorandum than a letter, and she read them aloud: "The andirons, the fire-set, the handles on the high-boy, the handles on the desk, the trimmings of the clock, the pendulum, the trimmings on the best bed, the handles on the dresser, the key of the desk—Gold."

"My father did the work; he made the things of gold instead of brass, and he *knew!*" exclaimed Harry.

The girl was ghastly white. She continued to look with a wild gaze of awful understanding at the old man sitting stark and dead on his fireless hearth, where he had sat so long with

the great god Mammon, whom he had not dared command to his own needs lest he destroy him. She reflected how he had sat there and starved with his wealth glittering in his eyes, and she also reflected, considering the look on his dead face, that perhaps his earthly retribution had won him heavenly peace. But she shuddered convulsively, and the gold light reflected from the tops of the andirons seemed to wink at her like eyes of infernal understanding and mockery. She looked at the letter again, and called out its contents again in a voice shrill with hysteria: "The andirons, the fire-set, the handles on the high-boy, the handles on the desk, the trimmings of the clock, the pendulum, the trimmings on the best bed, the handles on the dresser, the key of the desk—Gold."

THE UNDERLING

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I

THERE were five of the Lynde family—three brothers and two sisters. One of the sisters was a widow, one a spinster. The sisters kept house for the brothers, who were all unmarried. The brothers were working a large farm on scientific principles. People said they were getting rich. Their style of living gave evidence of prosperity.

About six o'clock one night the three brothers, with two hired men, came across the stubble of a recently mowed field towards the large white house where supper was awaiting them. The eldest brother, James, came first, walking with a free majesty of carriage. He was a handsome man, nearly forty. Behind James Lynde came his brother Edgar, the youngest of the three. He was also handsome, although with a boyish sort of beauty. He was thirty-

five, and looked scarcely more than twenty. The principal expression of his face was one of unquestioning happiness. People said that Edgar Lynde had the happiest disposition of them all. He was a great favorite with everybody, and the hired men would do anything for him. Unquestioning happiness has about it a certain self-centredness. The hired men said that Mr. Edgar would not worry if all the hay on the farm was out and a shower coming up. Women adored him. There was something about this happy-faced man, so happy that he felt no real need of anything more, even of them, which fascinated and allured. The two hired men came after Edgar, walking with the loose, almost disjointed, hip-hop of their kind.

Behind them, last of all, came William Lynde. He was slightly younger than James, but he looked much older. He was small, rather unfitted for manual labor by his physical condition. His delicate bones and muscles had become warped into unnatural shapes by exercise, rather than strengthened. He was bent, and moved with unmistakable weariness, yet with a persistency which gave the impression of reserve strength. His face, originally as handsome as that of either of his brothers, was worn, and had a look of dogged patience and humil-

ity which usually years alone bring. He seldom spoke. He was unfailingly industrious, but was popularly supposed to accomplish nothing, to know little, and to be "rather lacking." The hired men held him in no respect. He never raised a voice of authority. He crept after the others several paces in the rear, with his rake over his shoulder. As he walked—they were all moving towards the west—he gazed at the sunset sky. It was a sea of glory: a daffodil radiance, with clouds like wings of gold and silver and pearl. The man's face, gazing at it, changed. He looked like one for whom a trumpet of action had just sounded. The other men did not notice the sunset at all.

Finally they reached the great white house—a fine structure, with a noble array of outbuildings, barns, and storehouses. The hired men entered the kitchen door; the brothers, with the exception of William, entered a side door, and went directly to their rooms to wash and change their linen before supper. William entered the kitchen door with the hired men. In the kitchen was a masterful maid who had been long with the family. She was capable with a capability almost amounting to genius. The two hired men washed their hands and faces at the sink. William waited his turn, and the maid, whose name was Emma, regarded him

with scorn. The kitchen table was set for three. William always ate with the hired men. Emma gave supper to the three men, and to the two brothers and the sisters in the dining-room; then she had her own supper. After she had seen the three men in the kitchen eating, the two hired men with loud gulps and gurgles, and William silently, with his face bent with an indescribable gentle melancholy over his plate, she put on a clean white apron, entered the dining-room, and took up her station at the table there until the others had finished.

Mrs. Meserve, by virtue of her former married estate, as well as her superior age, had the head of the dining-table, which was of solid old mahogany. The dining-room was really charming. Beside the solid old mahogany table was a marvellous old sideboard, and a corner cupboard filled with Canton china. The windows had diamond-shaped panes. Annie Lynde, the spinster sister, was artistic, and she had had the old rectangular panes of distorting glass changed. She had also had the walls papered with dull blue, and there was a moulding with more of the blue Canton-ware. She was a year older than William, very pretty, with a delicate prettiness, and was well dressed. Mrs. Meserve was stouter and older, with a fair hardness of countenance, and she was well dressed. The

brothers, now they had changed their working-clothes, appeared distinctly gentlemen.

The two meals progressed, the one in the dining-room, the other in the kitchen. William, of those in the kitchen, finished his supper first. He had not much appetite, and, besides, the alien company of the hired men irritated him more than usual. He rose abruptly and went out of the kitchen and the house, and back across the stubbly field until he reached the nine-acre lot—a noble field, as level as a floor, enclosed with well-kept stone walls, and bordered on two sides with sweeping elms. He crossed to one of those sides, and seated himself on the wall on a large flat stone, where he had often sat before. Then his face took on an almost happy expression. He looked at the trees, which crossed the horizon with majestic arcs of grace; he looked at the sky, which had not yet lost all its sunset glory, but was fading slowly with wonderful gradations of rose and violet and primrose, and at the stubble of the field. The mutilated stalks of grass showed rainbow lights, and the air was sweet and cool. The trees, the sky, the field, the blessed coolness, and the descending shade of the night were all inexpressibly dear to the man. He could just see, across the field, the roof of a house. When he looked at that, his face be-

came at once yearning and benignant. He could hear faintly across the field the sound of a piano and a singing treble voice. It was rather thin, but sweet, and carried far. The song had a pretty air, somewhat plaintive; the words were inaudible. William listened. That was really what he had come to this place for. He came there nearly every warm night, when the windows were open and he could hear the singing.

Miss Rose Willard lived in the house. She was the music-teacher of the village, and sang in the church choir every Sunday. She usually practised the hour after supper. As he listened, William seemed to see her seated at the piano in the pretty little parlor, where he had been a few times years ago. Rose Willard was not so very young, but she was a beauty. He could see just how her face looked: her sweet eyes bent upon the lines of the song, the singing curve of her parted lips. He sighed; and yet not altogether sorrowfully. Suddenly the music ceased; it usually lasted an hour. The man's face fell disappointedly. Then he saw a flutter of something white across the field. It was now nearly dusk. William gazed at the pale, moving flutter across the field, close to the trees, where the stubble was not so trying to delicately shod feet. Then, before he

could realize it, Rose Willard stood before him. Her dainty white gown was gathered up, revealing the lace on her petticoat; a lilac ribbon was tied around her waist; her gown was slightly open at the neck, revealing a firm, round throat. Rose was rather below the middle height; she was small and firm, with charming curves. Her face was round, with large blue eyes, and her curling yellow hair was twisted into a little crest at the top of her head. She stood looking at the man on the wall in an odd fashion, half ashamed, half defiant.

"Good-evening, Mr. Lynde," said she, finally.

Then William collected himself and rose. "Good-evening, Miss Willard," he replied, and all his miserable timidity and humility were upon him again.

She continued to look at him, and now a scorn and anger were in her look, as well as shamefacedness and defiance.

"I want to ask you something," she said, abruptly.

William bowed.

"I want to know if you weren't here last evening."

"Yes, I believe I was," replied William.

"And the evening before that?"

"I think so."

"Almost every evening this summer?" continued the woman, pitilessly.

"I don't know but I was."

"Why?"

William did not answer.

"Why?" insisted the woman.

Then William said something about its being a cool place and pleasant to sit in.

"I should think you would sit on the piazza at your own house with your brothers and sisters," said Rose. Her voice in speaking was almost a singing voice, loud and sweet, but entirely uncompromising.

William hung his head before her straight blue gaze in a weary, patient fashion which seemed to enrage her.

"Why don't you hold your head up?" she burst out. "Why do you do so? William Lynde, I am all out of patience with you."

William continued to stand before her as if before a righteous judge.

Rose made an impatient movement, and seated herself on the wall. "I am doing an outrageous thing, and it would be town talk if it got out," said she, "but I can't help it. I've stood this just as long as I can. Sit down here beside me, William Lynde; I've got something to say to you." William moved slowly to a stone at some distance from Rose.

"Now," said Rose, "I am going to ask you some questions, and I want you to answer me. I've heard a good many things said, and now I am coming straight to you to find out how much is true and how much isn't."

William waited, his head turned away from her. He was conscious of a faint, subtle perfume from her garments, and the malodorousness of his own came in his face and filled him with a sort of despair. What was he to sit beside this white-clad song-bird?

"Have you had your supper?" asked she.

"Yes," replied William.

"Where?"

William hesitated.

"Where?" demanded the woman.

"In the kitchen."

"In the kitchen with the hired men?"

"Yes," admitted William, with a sort of gasp.

"Why didn't you eat in the dining-room with the rest of the family? Why do you eat in the kitchen with the servants? Why don't you dress like a gentleman as your brothers do? You must have your rights in the property as well as they."

"I can't tell you why," William said, in a muffled voice.

"Nonsense! Yes, you can tell me, too. Why can't you tell me?"

William remained silent, but his face in the dim light was as the face of a ghost, and he was swallowing convulsively as if he were choking back sobs.

"Before I'd be an underling all the days of my life, when I had as good a right to hold up my head as anybody, I'd—" Rose stopped. She had no expression forcible enough.

The two sat silently on the wall; then Rose spoke again. "I am going to do a dreadful thing, I suppose," said she. "I am mortified and ashamed of myself for doing it, and you needn't think I am not. Afterwards, when I think it over, I shall be almost crazy, but I am going to do it. I am going to ask you if you remember a night when you walked home with me from church, years ago, when we were very young."

William nodded. "Yes," he replied, in a choking voice. "I never forgot."

"It was just before your father died."

William nodded again, and again murmured yes.

"Well," said Rose, "I didn't know but you had forgotten. I am going to say right out—although, as I said before, when I think of it afterwards I shall be most ready to kill myself for it—that I never forgot, and—" She hesitated, then she went on with a sort of

shamed resolution. "Of course, I haven't married"—she bridled a little as she spoke—"but, of course, I've had my chances, and now—"

William trembled perceptibly.

"I have a good chance now," said Rose; "perhaps you can guess who, but—I guess I am not made like a good many women. When I have once—" She paused and hesitated, then she continued, firmly: "When I admitted what I did to you, that time," she said, "I didn't do it in a flirty kind of way, like some young girls. I was never that kind, and I never forgot, and I have always felt bound to myself because of it, if I didn't to you. Then there was another thing. I have been scolding you for letting yourself be so put upon, but I guess I am one of the kind of women who has a liking for the under dog." Her defiant voice trembled and broke. She began to weep softly. Her dainty shoulders, turned from the man beside her, were heaving. William looked at her, and his face was convulsed and ghastly. Then he spoke with determination.

"I have always wondered if I owed it to you to tell you something," he said, "but I wasn't quite sure. Now I know, and I am going to tell you."

"You needn't on my account, if you have

changed your mind," said Rose, in a bitter, sobbing voice.

"I have never changed my mind." In spite of himself, William's voice was full of the tenderest inflections. "It wasn't that, but I didn't know how much you had understood or meant, you were so pretty, and there were so many—"

"Enough was said for any girl who had any self-respect to draw one conclusion," replied Rose, with spirit.

"Yes, but it was a hard thing to tell. I knew you thought I liked you, but you went on just the same, pretty and laughing as ever, and whether you meant—"

"I never was a girl to wear my heart on my sleeve, nor say and do things of that kind unless I did mean them."

"I didn't know quite what to do. I see now I ought to have told you, but it was hard."

"What was hard?"

"To tell you."

"To tell me what?"

"To tell you I had done something wrong, so that I could never marry anybody."

"What have you done wrong, for Heaven's sake? I don't believe you ever hurt a fly, William Lynde. You were never that kind. You always took the heavy end of things and

let yourself be put upon more or less. I don't believe a word of it."

"It is the truth," said William, in a heavy voice.

"You don't mean that you ever did anything that would make you liable to arrest, or—anything of that kind, if you were found out?"

"Yes," replied William.

"I don't believe a word of it," said Rose. William remained silent. His face had a curious doggedness—the doggedness of a martyr under fire. Rose moved a little nearer. "Well, if you did," said she, "people can always overlook anything if one is sorry and never does so again."

"I am not sorry," said William, "and I should do so again."

Rose stared and shrank back. "William Lynde," said she, "what on earth do you mean?"

"I have committed a crime," said William, in a voice so calm that it sounded hard. "I was tempted, and I yielded, and I should do so again."

The woman's face changed. She felt a little fear of him. "Do your folks know about it?" asked she.

"They know what I did," replied William.

He spoke evasively, but Rose did not notice that.

"And they have kept quiet about it? I think they have stood by you pretty well."

"Yes, they have," assented William, wearily.

"Well, I am not going to urge you to tell what you did, if you don't want to," said Rose, and her voice was full of suspicious inflections, and the singing quality had disappeared.

"I'll tell you some time," said William.

"When?"

"I can't tell you while I am living. I'll leave a letter for you to read after I am dead."

"What nonsense!" said Rose, harshly. "Ten chances to one you'll outlive me."

"No, I guess I sha'n't. I am not as well as I used to be."

"Not anything serious?" said Rose, and again the tenderness was in her voice.

"No, I guess not," replied William, patiently, "but I'll write a letter, anyway."

Rose's whole body inclined towards him as they sat there. "I am willing to overlook it, not knowing," said she, in a low voice.

"No, Rose, I can't," said the man. "It's no use; I can't."

Rose sprang to her feet. "Well, I guess I've humiliated myself enough for one night!" she cried. "I wouldn't marry you now, William

"'NO, ROSE, I CAN'T. IT'S NO USE; I CAN'T'"

Lynde, if you were to tell me you hadn't done anything worse than to steal a pin."

William was silent.

"I expect your brother to-night," she said. "I don't know whether you know it or not, but he has been after me for a long time."

"Yes, I know it," said William, in a choking voice.

"Well, I guess I may as well tell him to-night that I'll marry him."

"I hope you will be happy," said William, and she could scarcely hear him.

"I guess I shall be as happy as most people," said she. "Your brother is good-looking, and has a good disposition, and he holds up his head as if he wasn't ashamed of anything he has ever done."

"He has no call to be," replied William.

Rose went slowly home across the field. The stubble pricked her feet, and she set them down with a gingerly impatience. She was angry with William, she pitied him, and she felt humiliated. She said to herself that it had come to a pretty pass when she, Rose Willard, had in a measure thrown herself at a man's head to be rejected. Then she wondered what in the world he had done, and evil surmises swarmed in her innocent mind like so many unclean flies. She was a good woman,

and had led a pure life, but the imagination for evil is dormant or rampant in all things human. She really stained herself imagining what William might have done, as she crossed the field, her dainty white gown gathered up, the lace of her petticoat ruffling around her carefully stepping feet.

When she reached home she found her widowed aunt, Eliza Ames, and her sister, Gloria. Gloria was a libellous name for Rose's elder sister, but there had always been a Gloria in the Willard family, and the name had fallen to her lot, with none of the meaning implied by it. Gloria was older than Rose, and a fac-simile of her in everything except tints. Nothing more sallow and, where it was not sallow, colorless could be imagined than her face. She seemed homelier than if she had not had Rose for a sister. She had contrast to encounter as well as her own defects. But Gloria did not repine, at least openly. She had an even temperament, which was a blessing to her. Marriage had been dismissed finally from her thoughts when she was eighteen and a young man had walked home from evening meeting with her, and the next week with another girl, whom he had married in three months. Privately Gloria regarded that as the chance which every woman is said to have, and it was a taste of sweet which comforted her.

When Gloria looked up at Rose, lovely as a flower, in the choir, she had a curious pride of proprietorship in her. It really seemed to her that in some way Rose was dependent upon her for her beauty and her sweet singing voice, that to her were due the thanks for both. It was also borne in upon Gloria's mind that Rose owed all the comforts of life to her. She took pleasure in thinking her sister unpractical. Rose made all her own pretty gowns, but Gloria never fairly realized that she herself did not make them; she looked at a hat which Rose had trimmed, and it seemed to her that she was the one who had fastened on the knots of ribbon and the flowers. She even had an odd sense of singing instead of Rose, and, withal, she was entirely sincere. Rose was good-nature itself as regarded her sister. She was as sweet, in fact, with loyalty as a rose is with its essential perfume.

To-night, as Rose entered, Gloria was seated in the lighted parlor, engaged on some fancy-work. She looked at her beautiful sister, and it was as good to her as if she saw herself, and yet not because of unselfishness. Rose seated herself at the piano, and began to sing a foolish, sentimental song, but in a moment her voice broke. She leaned her head over against the music-rack.

"What on earth is the matter?" asked Gloria.

"Too many fools in the world," replied Rose, in a voice which did not seem like her own, so gibing and bitter was it.

"I don't see what there is to cry about in that," said Gloria.

Rose laughed a little, and began to sing again. Her voice was triumphantly sweet and clear.

"I guess there isn't much the matter," said Gloria. Then the door-bell rang, pealing out in the midst of Rose's song.

"I guess you'll be all right now," whispered Gloria. She admired Edgar Lynde, and felt as proud as if he had been her own lover. Then she gathered up her work and went out of the room.

When Edgar Lynde came in and had seated himself, he begged Rose to go on with her song.

"It is a silly thing," said Rose. "I don't believe you will like it."

"It sounded very pretty as I was coming up the walk," said Edgar. "What is it?"

"Just a little thing I came across the other day in Crosby's."

"You didn't tell me the name."

"The name is 'Who loves once loves for aye,'" said Rose, and there was an odd tone of defiance in her voice.

Edgar laughed his unfailing laugh of merriment. There was to Rose something exasperating about Edgar Lynde's laugh. It did not seem to her as if everything in life was provocative of mirth, or even of good-nature.

"Sounds as if that might be a pretty song," said Edgar. There was sentiment in his voice, for he was, in his light-hearted way, fond of Rose; still, he laughed.

"I don't see what you are laughing at," said Rose.

"Oh, nothing," replied Edgar. "I was only thinking how many widows and widowers, and even folks who have had stacks of love-affairs, would feel singing that song." There was nothing whatever satirical in his voice, which expressed simply good-humored and happy acquiescence with the laws of life.

Rose set her full lips firmly. "It may be truer than you think, all the same," said she. "You don't know what is at the bottom of folk's hearts."

"Well," retorted Edgar, "if anything like that is at the bottom of a heart, that man or woman had better stick to the one it's meant for; that's all I've got to say."

A singular expression came over Rose's face; her full lips tightened still more. "That's what I say," said she. Then she began to sing. Her

voice rang out with unusual feeling and sweetness.

The music was light, and the words almost foolish enough to be incomprehensible, but she threw meaning into the song.

"By Jove!" cried Edgar, after Rose had finished, "that is one of the best things I have heard for a long time."

"I am glad you like it," said Rose, moving away from the piano.

"It is a pity you can't sing it in the choir," said Edgar, with his laugh.

"I fear it would hardly answer," replied Rose. She took some crochet-work of rose-colored wool off the table and sat down.

"It would break up the meeting, I guess," said Edgar, and he laughed again. He pulled a chair close to her with easy grace. Then he caught at her work.

"Edgar Lynde, you will snarl my wool so I can never get it straight," said Rose, still impatiently.

"Oh, hang the wool!" said Edgar. Then he pulled the work out of her lap and gave it a toss onto the floor. Rose sat still, with an odd expression as of some one who expects something long looked for and is passive before the fatality of its advance.

"I don't want you to work to-night; I want

you to attend to Edgar," said the man, and there was a childlike tone of tenderness in his voice.

Rose remained sitting, quietly waiting.

Edgar leaned over her. He took one of her hands, which she immediately pulled away, although so gently that the motion did not savor of repulse.

"You are going to marry me, dear, aren't you?" said Edgar.

Rose remained silent. She stared straight ahead. Her face was pale except for red spots on the cheeks; tears stood in her fixed eyes.

"Why don't you answer, dear?"

"I suppose so."

Edgar gave a little triumphant laugh and flung an arm around Rose's waist. "You suppose so; I like that," he repeated. "That is all a man gets after he has been hanging around a girl as long as I have."

"That ought to be enough," said Rose, soberly. "Of course, I have understood, or thought I did, what your attentions meant. There is no use in pretending I didn't. We are not children."

"Well, I have had my eye on you ever since you were that high," said Edgar, indicating a three-feet height from the floor. "I know, dear, you would have been blind if you had

not supposed so. But—" Edgar hesitated a second. Then he went on: "I will confess, though, I thought at one time that William had the best chance. That kept me back."

Rose turned on him abruptly. "What is it about William?" she asked.

"You won't see much of William, anyway, dear," replied Edgar.

"Why?" said Rose, and her tone was imperative.

Edgar shrugged his shoulders. "William is not much with the rest of the family," he said.

"Why?"

Edgar's smiling lips became firm. He looked down almost frowningly at her. "Rose," he said, "I love you, and I am going to do everything I can to make you happy, but there is one thing I cannot do, and none of the rest of us can do, and you must never ask it nor expect it."

"What is that?"

"You must not ask why William lives as he does, or why he is not, strictly speaking, one of the family."

"He eats with the hired men, doesn't he?" asked Rose.

"Yes, dear."

"And you cannot tell me why?"

"No, dear, and you must not ask me. We

have good and sufficient reasons for it all. I know it looks as if we were treating William terribly, but we are treating him better than you may think." Suddenly Edgar's face, looking down at Rose's beautiful one, changed. "Say, Rose, what are you going to be married in?" said he. "White and a veil?"

"If I am not too old," replied Rose, with a curious angry blush.

"Stuff!" said Edgar. "There is not a young girl in town who can compare with you. White you wear, veil and all. Now I have waited all this time, you need not think I am going to miss anything." Edgar laughed again, exultingly, and again his exultant laugh irritated Rose. "Why did you make me wait so long, dear?" he asked. "You never even gave me a chance to ask you before."

"I wasn't in any hurry to get married," replied Rose, evasively.

"Hurry! I should think not," returned Edgar, laughing a loud peal. "Well," he said, "you've got to hurry now, dear; and I am going to have the wedding march played like a jig, and you will have to run up the aisle, with your white veil streaming out behind." Edgar leaned his face close to Rose to kiss her, but she pushed him away.

"Don't!" said she.

Edgar regarded her with hurt astonishment. "Why," said he, "aren't you going to let me kiss you, now we are engaged?"

"Once, when you go home," said Rose.

That night when Edgar had gone it was nearly midnight. Rose went up to her room, and the door of Gloria's opposite was wide open. The room was full of moonlight, and Rose saw Gloria stir in her white bed. She entered softly, setting her candle on a little table in the entry.

"Are you awake, Gloria?" she whispered, softly.

"Yes. What is it?"

"I am going to marry Edgar Lynde before long."

"I hope you'll be real happy," Gloria whispered back. Rose went up to the bed, and Gloria kissed her. Then Rose went out. "Please shut my door," Gloria said, in a muffled voice.

After Rose had gone, Gloria still lay there awake in the moonlight. Her cheeks were quite wet with tears; and yet she was not conscious of unhappiness or of envy because of the sight of her sister's possessing a happiness which she must miss. Still, her self-esteem held her firm. She felt like the background of gloom against which there is only possible the

true belief of happiness. She almost felt as if, had there been no Gloria, with her calm self-renunciation, there could have been no Rose—certainly no Rose to the extent of beauty and happiness of which she was capable. She lay awake a long time planning Rose's trousseau.

II

The next Sunday Rose dined with the Lyndes. She was charming in her summer silk of a soft, brown shade and her hat with the brim faced with pink roses. There was a state dinner.

William as usual sat meekly with the hired men in the kitchen, but he ate nothing. He was ghastly pale. He had dressed himself, as he always did on Sunday, in his best clothes. After dinner he went across the field to his accustomed seat on the stone-wall and thought about what was coming, how Rose Willard was going to marry Edgar and would live in the house as his brother's wife. "I've got to stop feeling about her the way I have done," he said to himself. "There is no use talking, it has got to be done."

Sitting there, the man strove as resolutely and with as much agony to pluck the love from his heart as a wounded man to pluck a spear

from a wound. "It has got to be done," he kept saying to himself over and over.

At last, when he rose and crept off home across the fields he actually limped. He looked like an old man.

The next afternoon William left the hay-field early; the hay was nearly in, and he considered that they could spare him. James called after him in wonder.

"Where are you going, William?" he asked.

"I must drive over to Askam before supper," William replied, never turning his head, as he strode across the field in his unwonted self-assertion.

Edgar wiped his forehead, gazed towards the west, where the sun was sinking, and thought of Rose. He fairly laughed with love of her and self-love. He worshipped at a double shrine, and was in an ecstasy. He thought how happy he was, and how happy he was making Rose, and he laughed again. The hired men, watching him furtively, grinned.

"He dunno whether he's on his head or his heels," one grunted to the other.

Meanwhile William was driving a lame old horse to Askam. He was going to buy a wedding-present for Rose. He had his own account at the Askam bank. He drew generously upon it, and carried home a service of solid silver.

When he reached home supper was over, and Emma had relapsed from her frame of mind of the day before.

"Supper is all over," she said, sternly, to him when he entered by the kitchen door as usual.

"It's all right," replied William, carrying his large, neat package from the jeweller's.

Emma eyed it curiously. "I can't have supper standin' round an hour on a washin'-day," said she.

"It's all right," repeated William. "I don't want any supper." Then, much to her astonishment, he passed directly into the sitting-room with his package. He produced as much astonishment there. His sisters, seated near the table with their work, and James with his evening paper (Edgar had gone to see Rose), started. William spoke to his elder sister, Mrs. Meserve. "Will you come into the parlor a minute?" said he. "I want to speak to you."

Mrs. Meserve cast a glance of wonder and alarm at her sister and James, and rose and followed William into the parlor.

"I got a present," said William, "and I thought I would like to have you see it."

"A wedding-present?" asked Mrs. Meserve. William nodded. He was busy unwrapping the package.

"Well, you *are* in a hurry," said Mrs. Meserve.

William opened the box and displayed his purchases in their Canton-flannel bags.

Mrs. Meserve gasped. "You don't mean it's solid?" said she.

"You don't suppose I would give her anything that was not solid," said William. He spoke in a tone of resentment new to him, but Mrs. Meserve was so wrapped in her contemplation of the shining silver pieces, which gave off bluish lights in the room, that she did not notice.

"It is magnificent," she said, in an awed voice. "Magnificent. I never saw anything to equal it."

"Then you think it is all right, that I could not have got anything better?" asked William, and his voice expressed a pathetic pleasure.

"Better? Goodness! I should think it was a princess that was going to get married. I never saw anything like it. I don't see when she's going to use it, for my part."

"Well, I'm glad it's all right," said William. Then he returned, crossing the sitting-room in his humble fashion, and they heard his steps on the back stairs leading to his room.

Mrs. Meserve, who had followed him, spoke as soon as the door was closed behind him. "He has bought a solid-silver service, ever so

many pieces—I never saw anything so magnificent—for a wedding-present," said she.

Annie dropped her work. "A solid-silver service!" exclaimed she.

"The handsomest one you ever laid your eyes on."

Annie and James followed Mrs. Meserve into the parlor to inspect William's wedding-present to Rose. He himself, sitting beside the window in his little bedroom, reflected upon it with a measure of self-gratulation new to him. It was a hot night and overcast. There was a fine misting rain. It blew into the open window upon him until he was quite damp. He seemed to see the blue lights of the silver pieces, and he tried to see them as Rose might. At last it seemed to him that he could do so. He became sure that he was reflecting upon the possession of the silver exactly as a woman might do, and he smiled in the darkness, an angelic smile of unselfish love. Then he coughed. He had coughed a good deal lately, but nobody had noticed it. He had not noticed it himself. However, his cough settled a much-deliberated question when the night of the wedding came, a month later. The Lyndes had wondered whether it would be inevitable that he should go.

"He has no clothes fit," said Mrs. Meserve,

"and it seems hardly advisable to get them for just one occasion."

"That is so," replied Annie.

William himself had made up his mind. A curious pride in going possessed him. The worm turned. He ordered a suit of clothes in Askam at his brother's tailor's, and the tailor told Edgar.

When Edgar came home after trying on his wedding suit, he told James. "Say," he said, "William is going."

"To the wedding?"

"Yes; he is having some clothes made. The tailor told me."

James frowned. "Well, perhaps it is better," he said, at length. "People might think it singular for him not to attend his own brother's wedding, and might talk, and that is what we don't want."

But when the day of the wedding came, William's cough had so increased that it had come to be noticed, and Annie and Mrs. Meserve talked it over.

"It is no use," said Annie, positively; "leaving everything else out of the question, he cannot go for that reason alone. He coughs every minute. It is incessant. Hear him now." In fact, at that moment the sound of William's persistent cough was heard from the kitchen.

"Such a cough as that right through the ceremony," said Annie—"why, it is ridiculous. Of course he can't go."

"But his clothes have come home from the tailor's, and everything," Mrs. Meserve said, hesitating.

"Nonsense, Agnes; he can't go. You know yourself that anybody that coughs like that can't possibly go to a wedding."

That afternoon, when William was sitting alone on the back porch, Mrs. Meserve came out hesitatingly. She did not like what she had to do. She told him that she and Annie had been talking it over, and they both thought that, coughing as he did, it was hardly advisable for him to go to the wedding. William turned his face towards her, and for the first time she saw an expression of something like reproach on it. She noticed, too, for the first time that he had grown thin. He had shaved, and was all ready to don the new suit which lay on his bed up-stairs.

"We both think it best," said Mrs. Meserve, again, in a faltering tone. Then she added: "It will be a damp night, too, and it is hardly safe for you to go out, coughing as you do, William."

William looked away. "All right," he responded.

"You can put on your new clothes, and we will send a carriage and you can go to the reception afterwards at Rose's."

"All right," said William.

When Mrs. Meserve joined Annie, she replied rather soberly to her question as to whether she had told William.

"He said all right," answered Mrs. Meserve. "Annie—"

"What is it?" said Annie. She was fastening pink roses on the front of her dress.

"Do you suppose that cough ought to be looked out for? He has grown very thin. I noticed it for the first time just now."

"Nonsense! It is only a throat cough," replied Annie. "Has Edgar gone?"

"Yes; he started just before I came up-stairs. He looked as handsome as a picture. I hope you are right about William's cough."

But in the mean time something unforeseen and unprecedented was happening at the Willard House.

Edgar had proceeded to the house of the bride-elect, because of a note just received from her aunt asking him to do so. The note was evidently written hurriedly and had an agitated air. "Please come at once instead of going to the church first; something has hap-

pened," it said. Edgar felt a little uneasy as he rolled along the old, familiar road, with such a feeling of strangeness in his heart that it almost looked unfamiliar to him. He gazed out at the leafless trees, whose branches gleamed golden under the brilliant winter sun against the blue of the sky, and it did not seem that they could possibly be the same trees which he had seen ever since he could remember, but, instead, trees which had gotten their growth in some unknown paradise. He was very fond of Rose, and very happy. It is true that her aunt's letter made him a little uneasy, but his cheerful optimism sustained him.

When he reached Rose's house, her aunt's face disappeared from the window, and the front door opened directly.

Edgar sprang lightly out of the coach, and ran up the walk and the steps. "Why, what is the matter?" he asked, laughingly.

"Come in a minute," replied Mrs. Ames, mysteriously.

Edgar followed her into the house and the sitting-room. "What is the matter?" he asked again, and he was still smiling.

Mrs. Ames, who was emotional, began to cry. Even then Edgar's smiling face did not change. "I don't know what has come over Rose," Mrs. Ames sobbed out.

"She isn't sick?"

"No, but she said she must see you before she went to the church, and—"

"And what?"

"Oh, she looks and acts so queer. I don't know what is the matter."

Edgar laughed outright. "Oh, Lord! probably her dress doesn't fit," said he, lightly. "Where is she?"

"She's in the parlor with Gloria. She's all dressed. It isn't that. It fits her beautifully. She's just like marble. I don't know what the matter is. I guess she's told Gloria, but she hasn't said a word to me, her own aunt, that's been just like a mother to her." Mrs. Ames began to weep weakly.

Edgar frowned a little; then he laughed his everlasting laugh of sheer optimism, and slowly entered parlor. In the midst of the parlor sat Rose enveloped in a cloud of fleecy white, through which her face showed, as her aunt had said, with the rigidity of marble. Not a vestige of her lovely color remained. Even her lips were white and closely compressed. Gloria, who was standing over her, and dressed in her wine-colored silk, which cast a glow over her own usually colorless face, gave a terrified roll of her eyes at Edgar entering. Then she murmured something about the

note which Rose had wished sent. Edgar made one stride to Rose, and, thrusting aside her veil, took her hands, which were as cold as ice.

"What on earth is to pay, dear?" he asked.

Gloria stood still, trembling visibly from head to foot. Rose had told her the whole story, and she made no motion to leave the room.

Rose looked up at Edgar, and her features contracted into an odd expression almost of hate and repulsion.

"What is it, sweetheart?" Edgar said again, but he was still smiling. It seemed as if nothing could subdue his expression of radiant triumph.

"I've got to tell you something," Rose said, and all the singing sweetness was gone from her voice. It rang harsh and shrill.

Her aunt, out in the entry, heard every word.

"Well, Rose darling, what is it? How lovely you look! But, say, you are awfully pale. Aren't you well?"

"I am doing an awful thing," Rose replied, in that voice which did not seem like hers.

"Why, Rose dear? Every girl gets married. Say, sweetheart, you are nervous."

"No, I am not nervous. I must tell you the truth. I am going to be married to you."

"Well, I rather guess you are."

"I am going to be married to one man, to promise things before God and man, when—"

"When what?"

"When I love another with all my soul and strength, and have, ever since I can remember."

Edgar still smiled, but now the smile seemed like simply a contraction of the muscles around his handsome mouth.

"Who is he?"

"Your brother."

"My brother? James?"

"No; William."

"Good Lord! Why?"

"I don't know why. I know he has done something dreadful. He told me so himself. I know all that, but I can't break off the habit of loving him. I have loved him ever since I went to school with him."

"Nonsense, Rose; you are beside yourself. If you knew—"

"It wouldn't make any difference It wouldn't ever make any difference to me. I have imagined everything. Nobody can imagine anything worse. He could not have done anything worse than the things I have imagined, but I love him just the same, more than anybody in the whole world, and I now feel as if his sin, whatever it is, is mine too. I feel as

if I had done just what he did, and I can no more hate him for it than I could hate myself. I love him, and I shall love him just the same after I am married to you."

"Good Lord!" ejaculated Edgar, still with his mechanical smile.

"Yes, I shall. I thought I should not, but all at once, after I was dressed and looked at myself in the glass, I saw there what would always be—a woman who was married to one man when she loved another enough to die for him; who loved him enough to love even whatever he had done that was wrong, and to feel that she would do it herself."

The smile slowly faded from Edgar's face, and it was like the going-out of a light. "Do you mean to back out, then, at this late date, when the people must be in the church?" said he.

"No, I don't back out. I will marry you if you say so. I know I am putting you in an awful light and doing you an awful wrong if I don't, but I can't marry you without telling you the truth."

Edgar Lynde had within him the capacity of men of his make, who are uniformly good-natured and optimistic, of almost devilish revolt when pushed against the wall, of sudden moves of almost incredible daring. His very opti-

mism had its roots in self-esteem. It seemed to him preposterous, almost incredible, that anything like this could happen to him. At the same time he was not a man to force a woman into an unwilling marriage. A sort of contempt was in his face as he gazed at Rose in her bridal attire, with her love for his brother in her heart. He was almost brutal. He turned suddenly and looked at Gloria. Her eyes fell. She had all her life, ever since she could remember, thought there was no one to equal Edgar Lynde in the whole world. His own anger and wonder at her sister were reflected in her face. Her eyes, which were really lovely, were brilliant with unshed tears. The unwonted glow on her cheeks made her almost beautiful.

"Look here," said Edgar Lynde, "if you think—" He addressed that to Rose, then stopped.

"I will go through with it if you say so," moaned Rose, "but I had to tell you the truth."

"If you think I would marry a woman after she had confessed her love for my own brother, and a brother who is unworthy of it, you are mistaken," said Edgar then. There was no longer even the semblance of a laugh or even a smile on his face. The hardening of their old lines made it seem, instead, fierce. Then

"'I WILL GO THROUGH WITH IT IF YOU SAY SO,' MOANED ROSE."

he continued: "But," he said, "if you think I am going to have all those people turned away and have them told that there is to be no wedding—" he paused again. He looked at Gloria. Then he spoke again. "See here, Gloria," said he, "I know second fiddle isn't the best place in the orchestra, and I know I am asking you to play it, but I'll promise you to do all I can for you if you will."

Gloria stole a glance at him. The color mounted all over her face.

Edgar went on quite calmly: "I know I have been courting your sister a long time, and I won't pretend that I haven't thought more of her than of you, and I expected to marry her, of course, and now she has decided at the last moment to put me to shame in the face and eyes of the whole town. You can make it right if you will. People will only think a trick has been played on them. I have always been playing tricks on people, and they won't be so surprised as if I were another man. I shall like you well enough, Gloria, and I'll do my best to make you a good husband, and you have not much to look forward to here."

Gloria again glanced at him. She was so agitated that she almost chattered like an idiot. She was nearly in hysterics.

"Make up your mind quickly," Edgar said,

in a masterful voice. "There isn't any time to lose. Rose's things will fit you. Go upstairs with her, and change dresses, and go and be married to me. Will you do it, Gloria?"

"You don't love me," said Gloria then, with a piteous cry—her last cry of affronted maidenhood.

"Oh, Lord!" said Edgar, "I shall love you well enough. I dare say I should have loved you instead of Rose in the first place if you had been as good-looking, and in a few years what do looks amount to? I shall like you well enough. I am not one of the kind of men who go into fits over a woman, anyway. I shall be just as happy with you as with her. Hurry, Gloria. There is the carriage for you and your aunt and Rose now." In fact, a carriage decorated with white ribbons just then drove up before the parlor windows. Gloria cast one more glance at Edgar—a glance of adoration, of shame, and something like guilt; then she looked at her sister. Rose made an almost imperceptible motion towards the door. Gloria followed her. They both rustled out of the room. "Be as quick as you can," Edgar called after them. His face was very pale, but it had resumed its look of pride at his awards of life. He called to Mrs. Ames in the entry, and was laughing when he accosted her.

"I have something to tell you," he said. She stared at him, white-faced. "You thought I was going to marry Rose all the time, didn't you?" said Edgar.

"Of course," gasped Mrs. Ames.

"Well, I'm going to marry Gloria. I think if you go up-stairs and help them change dresses, it might help."

Mrs. Ames, ascending the stairs tremblingly, cast a scared look over her shoulder at him.

"It would be better for all concerned—for Rose and Gloria and me—if nothing of this got out," said Edgar. He began whistling as Mrs. Ames kept on up the stairs. He then went out of the house, got into his own carriage, and drove to the church, where most of the wedding-guests were already assembled.

It is probable that there had never been such a sensation in the village as that occasioned by Edgar Lynde meeting Gloria in bridal array instead of Rose, and being married to her. It was a simple wedding. Rose sat in the audience, dressed in the wine-colored silk which had been intended for her sister. Edgar had whispered vehemently to his sisters and brother, and they maintained an outward calmness, as if everything was going forward as had been planned, as did Rose and her aunt. People actually thought that it was one of the whim-

sical proceedings for which Edgar Lynde had always been noted in the place; that he had stolen a march upon them, and had been courting Gloria all the time instead of Rose, and had meant to marry her. Still, they wondered. Rose was, superficially at least, so superior to Gloria. However, Gloria, in her bridal white, looked better than she had ever done before. The shock of happiness radiated her dull face; her cheeks glowed. People whispered that she was almost as pretty as Rose, after all, and they guessed maybe she would make a better wife.

William went to the reception, and moved mechanically up to greet his brother and his bride. When he saw Gloria's face under the filmy veil instead of Rose's, his own turned ghastly white, and he staggered. A man caught his arm.

"What is the matter? Are you sick?" he asked.

William wavered back amid the crowd. "No, it isn't anything," he replied, choking back his cough.

"You look dreadful pale," said the man, kindly. He was a young farmer with a sympathetic nature. He steered William over to a sofa. "You'd better set down," said he, "and I'll see if Almira can't scare you up a

cup of coffee." Almira was the farmer's wife. Presently she came, bringing the coffee to William, who remained sitting where he had been placed, but whose look was aloof upon Rose in her wine-colored silk, talking with seeming gayety with a knot of people on the other side of the room. Rose's manner was the same as ever, but her look was strange, and people remarked it. They whispered among themselves. William heard a man say to another that Rose Willard had got left, he guessed; that it wasn't always the birds with the finest feathers that got the nest. He himself was fairly dizzy with bewilderment. Edgar had said nothing to him. He had not, in fact, considered it worth while. William gradually gathered consciousness, sitting there on the sofa sipping his coffee, that Rose was not, after all, married; but he also seemed to gather a stronger consciousness than ever before that she was out of his own reach. She had never seemed so far from him as that afternoon, as she stood and chatted with the wedding-guests. She never once looked at him—at least, if she did, he did not know it. He noticed the strange look on her beautiful face, and wondered with the rest what it meant.

It was not long after Edgar's marriage that William moved out of the Lynde house into a

little shanty in the field. It had one room and a chimney, and could be warmed, and was comfortable enough. Gloria was the cause of his moving. Now she was married and at a pitch of happiness and success which she had never anticipated, her character took on a higher phase of self-satisfaction. She said openly to Edgar that either they must have a new house or William must live elsewhere. She showed the true imperiousness which had always been dormant in her nature.

"As for living in a family where one of the sons has done some awful thing so he can't live with the others, but has to eat with the hired men, I won't," said she.

The Lynde property was undivided. It was almost impossible for Edgar to separate his portion from the rest and live separately. The family discussed the matter, and William moved his poor belongings into the little shanty in the field. He was quite uncomplaining. Sometimes he wished that Rose had owned the silver service which glittered on the table when the family entertained, which was quite frequently since Edgar's marriage. However, he took some comfort in the reflection that Rose at least had the use of the silver sugar-bowl and cream-pitcher. But soon he became very ill. Then he was moved, in spite of his protest, into

the house, and James gave up his own chamber —a large, sunny room—to him. A specialist was consulted, a nurse was engaged, and Rose stayed at the house a great deal to assist, although she never saw William. She had a knack at delicate cookery, and she prepared the greater part of his meals. She herself grew thin and pale, and her beauty waned. She was torn with grief and love, and horror of that unknown something which William had done. She had locked up in her little rosewood desk a letter which William had written and sent to her the day after their conversation in the field, when he had thought she was to marry Edgar. It was addressed to Miss Rose Willard, and that envelope contained another, on which was inscribed, "To be opened and read after my death."

She often thought of this letter. William, now he was so ill, seemed the centre around which the whole family revolved. Their very indignation towards him made them more eager to do all that could be done.

At last it was said that William's death was only a matter of days. He no longer left his bed. It was then that Rose made up her mind. She was a woman with a good head and strong sense of justice, and that influenced her as well as her love for the sick man. "I

don't know what William has done," she said to herself, "and they will not tell me; but they must think it is something dreadful or they wouldn't have treated him as they have done. Now it may be that they are mistaken, and this letter which William wrote for me to read after he was dead explains everything. If that is the case, what folly it is for me to wait until he is dead. I should regret it all the days of my life." She considered her own possible pain as well as the injustice to William when she opened the letter the afternoon before he died.

She locked herself into a room before opening it, although she was quite safe from intrusion. James and Edgar had gone on business to Askam; Annie was lying down; Mrs. Meserve had gone on an errand to the drug-store. Rose, having locked the door, opened the letter and read it. It did not take long. It was very short. Rose thrust the letter into the bosom of her dress, and crossed the hall to William's sick-room. She knocked, and the nurse came to the door. "How is he?" she whispered. She was trembling from head to foot.

"He is quiet now," replied the nurse. "He had a hard coughing-spell an hour ago, but he has been quiet since."

"Is he asleep?"

The nurse cast a glance into the room. William was lying very still, with eyes partly closed and a ghastly streak of white visible between the lids. "No, I don't think so," he replied.

"I want to speak to him a moment," said Rose, "and I want you to go down-stairs while I do so. I have something particular to say while he is able to understand it."

The nurse looked hesitatingly at her. "You know it will not do to excite him," he said.

"I will not excite him to hurt him," said Rose, "but I must speak to him."

The nurse went rather reluctantly down-stairs, and Rose entered the room. She went straight to the bed where the sick man lay—a stark shape, dimly outlined beneath the bed-clothes, his head deeply sunken in the pillow as if with an abnormal heaviness, his face ghastly, and his expression fixed in a sort of majestic patience and melancholy.

"William," said Rose—"William."

William opened his eyes and looked at her, although seeming at the same time to look at something past her. He essayed a smile, but his face relapsed into its majestic melancholy. He had almost done with the things of earth.

"William," said Rose. "I—I opened your letter."

A sudden light of interest leaped into the sick man's face. He tried to speak, but the cough choked him. He made a terrific effort to subdue the cough, and succeeded. "Why didn't you wait?" he asked, in a loud, clear voice, which was startling, coming from those lips, so straight and blue that they looked like those of one already dead.

"I thought it over," said Rose, in her sweet, singing voice, "and I made up my mind it wasn't just to you to wait till you were gone. I made up my mind that if I had been mistaken I would not want to reproach myself with it all my life."

William looked at her, and his look was half reproachful, half joyful, as if, in spite of himself, he was glad for what she had done.

Rose glanced at the door, and saw that it was tightly closed. "William, I know it all now," she said. "How you destroyed your father's will because he had left everything to you, and how they found it out, and thought it was the other way around."

"If I had told them," said the sick man, "they would all have gone off and had nothing, and left me here. You don't know how proud—" He struggled again with his cough.

"I know you have been put upon all these years," said Rose, and her singing voice quavered.

"It was a dreadful thing I did. I made myself liable—" said the sick man. He cleared his voice, which seemed to come not so much from his throat as from his soul, such a far-off quality was in it. "The sense of guilt has always kept me down," he said. "It wasn't altogether the way they treated me; they had reason. I had made myself an underling. I knew I was guilty."

"Guilty," repeated Rose—"guilty for a reason like that!" She began to weep softly, turning away her head that William might not see her.

"Father had a hasty temper," said William, "and he and James quarrelled; then Edgar got mixed up in it, and Annie, and he didn't like Agnes's husband. He left them each a dollar apiece, and all the rest to me. I couldn't have it so. I don't believe but father has thought better of it himself by this time."

Rose continued to weep softly.

"If the lawyer who drew up the will hadn't died suddenly, just as father did, I couldn't have done it," said William. "James was suspicious, and he watched me that night when I went down to father's desk. Father had told

me all about the will, and I couldn't get him to change it. We had words about it, and James had overheard something, and put the wrong construction on it. Father was unconscious, and I knew he wouldn't live till morning. James caught me just as I put the will in the fire, and he couldn't save it. It was blazing. He accused me, and told the others. I couldn't deny it. I was guilty."

Rose wiped her eyes, came close to William, leaned over, and kissed his forehead.

"Now I will have you righted," said she.

But the sick man roused himself, and sat up with a terrible effort. "Oh, Rose," he begged, "don't tell them. Don't you see?"

"See what, William?"

"They will never get over it if they know, and I only wanted you to know, and I am almost through."

"Well," said Rose, "I won't tell them if you say not to, William."

"There is no use in the living worrying over the troubles of the dead, when they meant right," said William.

Rose went over to the hearth, where there was a fire burning, and dropped the letter. It blazed up quickly. William smiled. He had settled down again into a shrunken heap. Rose went up to William and kissed him again. "I

didn't marry your brother because I loved you so," said she. "I told him so at the last minute, and he asked Gloria. I loved you, sin and all, William, and now—I see, I love you, goodness and all. I have never seen such a good man as you, William, and loving you is better than being married to anybody else."

Then the nurse came in and Rose went out, and shortly afterwards William had a frightful coughing-spell. He became unconscious soon after midnight, in that wane of creation when the vitality of things of the earth is low, and died before morning.

It was the evening of the day of the funeral that James told Rose what had been the cause of the dead man's dissension with his family.

"We would not tell you, even though you had become one of us," he said, "but, now that the poor boy is gone, it can do him no harm, and in a way we owe it to you and to ourselves."

They were all sitting in the best parlor, and the sisters had reddened eyes. They had been weeping. James spoke tenderly, even while relating what his dead brother had done. It was evident that all rancor on the part of the family had disappeared.

"Poor devil!" said Edgar.

"He always had a sweet disposition," said Mrs. Meserve, in a weeping voice.

"I think he was out of his mind when he did it," said Annie, sobbingly.

It seemed incumbent upon Rose to speak. "I never lay up anything against the dead," said she. "He may have been better in his heart than any of us."

"God alone sees the heart," observed Mrs. Meserve, in a solemn voice.

"That is so," said Gloria.

Rose said no more. She sat beside the window. It was a wonderfully bright moonlight night, and they had not lit the lamps. The field across the road from the house stretched in vast levels of silver light. It seemed to Rose that she could see the underling coming across the field with a glory of his good motives around his head, and bent no longer beneath the burden of his earthly deeds, and she felt like his bride.

THE END

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